

THE RAJ GONDS  
OF  
ADILABAD

THE ABORIGINAL TRIBES  
OF  
HYDERABAD

Volume III

THE RAJ GONDS  
OF  
ADILABAD

Book I

MYTH AND RITUAL

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# THE RAJ GONDS OF ADILABAD

*A Peasant Culture of the Deccan*

Book I

MYTH AND RITUAL

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To  
MY MOTHER

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## P R E F A C E .

SINCE this book went to press the sub-continent of India has been the scene of epoch-making events. Only scholars of future generations will be able to assess the full implication of these events for the history of Southern Asia, but the anthropologist can have no doubt that they have initiated a reversal of cultural trends. For over a century India was open to the impact of western thought and western ways of life ; today she is consciously turning towards her own heritage and the indigenous roots of her complex culture pattern. These roots lie not only in the great historic civilizations of Dravidian and Aryan speech, not only in the earlier city civilizations of the Indus valley, but they have their ramifications among the multitude of yet older and simpler cultures that once filled the greater part of the peninsula. The 'aboriginals,' the peoples persisting in tribal forms of community life, are the last representatives of these ancient and truly autochthonous civilizations, and it is therefore only natural that with the present change-over from an extraspective to an introspective tendency in Indian thought, interest in the tribal peoples and cultures is growing.

Though the present book is mainly directed to the anthropologist, it will, I hope, enable the general reader to visualise the life of one of India's largest aboriginal tribes, and help him to form his own opinion on the merits or demerits of the policies which the governments of provinces and states are about to adopt *vis-à-vis* their tribal minorities.

In H.E.H. the Nizam's Dominions an extensive plan for the education and economic rehabilitation of aboriginals has been in operation for the last four years, and the scientific study of individual tribes is one of the essential features of this plan. I am greatly indebted to the Government of His Exalted Highness for the support and the many facilities afforded to me during the long years of field-work before I occupied an official position in the State. My particular thanks are due to Nawab Said-ul-Mulk of Chhatari, then President of the Executive Council, to Sir Theodore Tasker, C.I.E., I.C.S., who was Revenue Member when I began the study of the Raj Gonds, and to Mr. W. V. Grigson, C.S.I., I.C.S., who succeeded him at the Minister most closely associated with aboriginal problems. It is due to their interest in the study of human problems that in a time of shortages the publication of this series of anthropological monographs could be undertaken. Mr. Grigson, during whose term of office this book was written found time, amidst the calls of his extraordinarily heavy charge, to read the manuscript

and his constructive criticism and lively discussion has led to many improvements in the original text. How great a debt I owe to him cannot

of the Indian aboriginal

For practical assistance during the period of field-work I am indebted to those officers of Hyderabad who served in Adilabad in the years 1942-1945 during which period the material for this volume was collected. I am particularly indebted to Mr S M Qamruddin, B.C.S., and to Mr Moazzam Husain, B.C.S., to mention only two of those on whose help I had often to rely.

Mr. J. L. Chitale, B.A., B.L., was in charge of the printing and who helped me to make all the line-drawings contained in the text.

Finally I am indebted to Mr Abdul Qayyum, B.C.S., and the staff of the Government Press for their unstinted co-operation in the production of this volume.

During a recent visit to Hyderabad, I was most kindly received by Mr. J. L. Chitale, B.A., B.L., whose kind and helpful assistance was most valuable. I am most grateful to him for his kind and helpful assistance in writing a foreword.

CHRISTOPH von FÜRER-HAEMENDORF.

Hyderabad-Deccan,  
December, 1947



## FOREWORD.

Scientific anthropology is hardly a hundred years old. During this short period anthropologists have learnt a good deal about the peoples of the habitable globe and their ways of doing and thinking. As a result there is a new awareness of the individual ways of life of the "little" peoples, which must in time modify political theory and humanise the nineteenth century's dogmatic use of such terms as "nationalism," "civilization" and "savagery." It is clear that this advance has only been made through an improvement in the methods by which cogent facts are collected and handled, for scientific standing can only be claimed for studies based on reliable methods. In anthropology such a claim can now be made with regard to the standards of modern field-work, the results of which are embodied in many monographs ranging from *The Melanesians* of the pioneer R. H. Codrington over Seligman's monumental works to the innumerable books of present-day anthropologists of all schools. When it comes to theory, however, the position is less secure. The basic problems of human history remain unsolved. As Andrew Lang differed from the great Tylor, so Marett differed from the voluminous Frazer. Certain students of man's material culture find it easy to excuse themselves from any interest in sociology, while certain sociologists think it unnecessary to consider the things which man uses and the manner in which he shapes them. In fact anthropologists are divided against themselves under such rival labels as archæology, ethnology, technology and social anthropology. It would seem that the existence of specialist Chairs and Readerships in our Universities, the vehicles of our daily bread, has obscured the radical fact that we are all students of Man.

As Rivers used to warn his pupils, theoretical anthropology has demonstrated symptoms of nationalism. French anthropology based on classical humanism has tended to stress psychology and conceives the 'uncivilized' in terms of the illogical. British anthropology, preoccupied with the historical evolution of local customs and institutions, which it has studied in isolation, has used general humanity merely as a background. The generalised likeness of the peoples to one another was submitted to the rigours of German thinking by Bastian, whose *Elementargedanke* postulates the existence of primary mental characters common to mankind. But this is counterbalanced by the theory of the *Völkergedanke*, according to which environmental and other external factors, differing in the case of every individual people, are responsible for the variability in social and cultural forms. It was left to Ratzel to bring

Bastian's near metaphysics to earth in his great *Anthropogeographie*. To him the earth is one and whatever the characteristics of nations or - - - - -ly act upon - - - - - of animal - - - - - ical realism

led him to stress material environment as the chief factor in evolution. French humanism again reacting to Ratzel's dogmatic pronouncements found a place for man's energy and skill in the scheme of things as modifying geography and indeed sometimes recreating it. British concentration on special localities led in the search for a solution to administrative problems to an appreciation of society as reacting upon itself.

In India too anthropology began with the need for administrative facts. Warren Hastings saw the need, and the great administrative leaders Elphinstone, Malcolm Munro and Henry Lawrence persistently drummed it into the minds of their younger assistants. Mistakes of such legislation as the Bengal settlement pointed the lesson. So little by little for the purposes of the revenue services knowledge of the main features of the structure of living India was accumulated. Gradually the individuality of castes and peoples was set out against the general background of city and market town, the well tilled fields of Village India and the undemarcated tracts of the India of the hill and forest tribes. Both the Indian Census and the District Gazetteers, the handbooks of local administration were pioneer ideas. It was in the composition of the early volumes of Gazetteers that the problems of Indian anthropology were first formulated; they remain the service books for general information on the subject. The picture they paint is clear enough in its simplest

Hitherto there has been - - - - - Ary in nor Dravidian primitive sub-stratum - - - - - out history or contact

Such an assumption - - - - - modern anthropological thought and is wholly unacceptable. If many aboriginal tribes appear isolated and without clearly recognizable affinities to other tribal groups, this is only due to the gaps in our ethnological knowledge. The parts of India which have been adequately covered by anthropological field work are few. To the hills on the Assam-Burma border familiar to all anthropologists from Hutton's and Mills's classical monographs, and Chota Nagpur, the field of Sarat Chandra Roy's untiring efforts, have recently been added the hill tracts of Bastar and Orissa and a large part of the Deccan. But there exists for instance no monograph devoted to the great confederation of Bhil tribes and it has been left to Dr. von Furer-Haendorf to produce the first systematic study of the Raj Gonds.

that important tribe which in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries rose to political power, and still forms the bulk of the aboriginal population in Hyderabad, Berar and the Central Provinces.

Dr. von Fürer-Haimendorf has already produced a distinguished series of monographs on the peoples of Hyderabad, and for the last two years he has held the appointment of Adviser for Tribes and Backward Classes to H.E.H. the Nizam's Government. He is also serving the State as Professor of Anthropology in the Osmania University, and we may hope that in time this university will produce a school of anthropology whose members will take up the long neglected study of the ethnology of Southern India. The development of anthropological studies in the premier Indian State together with the recreation of the Anthropological Survey of India presages well for the future of Indian anthropology and for the soundness of the future administration of the country. It may be that through the association of scientific research with administrative planning many of India's social problems can be solved. The world is changing rapidly and India is changing with the world. Her hill and forest tribes are Indian in every sense of the word, and they cannot be left out of this change. They have a future not merely a past. The only policy which can guarantee their cultural and physical survival is one of sympathetic guidance and encouragement both economic and educational. This cannot be done without understanding. *The Raj Gonds of Adilabad*, like the two previous volumes in this series, is, apart from its great scientific merit, full of understanding and the present far-sighted and liberal policy of H.E.H. the Nizam's Government towards the tribal peoples of the State is the result of such anthropological understanding applied to an administrative problem.

K. DE B. CODRINGTON.

Bastian's near-metaphysics to earth in his great *Anthropogeographie*. To him the earth is one and whatever the characteristics of nations or tribes may be in fact, the peoples of the earth must necessarily act upon one another and react to one another. Man is not only a social animal, but a socially mobile one as well. Ratzel's sense of geographical realism led him to stress material environment as the chief factor in evolution.

ration on special localities led, in the search for a solution to administrative problems, to an appreciation of society as reacting upon itself.

In India too anthropology began with the need for administrative facts. Warren Hastings saw the need, and the great administrative leaders Elphinstone, Malcolm Munro and Henry Lawrence, persistently drummed it into the minds of their young assistants. Mistakes of such legislation as the Bengal settlement pointed the lesson. So, little by little, for the purposes of the revenue services, knowledge of the main features of the structure of the country was gained.

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## INTRODUCTION

NO aboriginal people of India has attained greater prominence on the political scene of past centuries than the large group of tribes commonly known by the generic term Gond. When the mist that still veils long periods in the history of the Deccan finally lifts, Gonds appear not only as the main population of wide areas in the very heart of India, described after them as Gondwana, but also as a ruling race equal in power and material status to many contemporary Hindu princes. Lacking unity and leadership the Gond states collapsed before the successive onslaughts of Moghul and Maratha armies, but the Gond populations remained, the old feudal system continued to function in many remote tracts and several Gond rajas enjoy up to this day the status of ruling chiefs. But besides the advanced sections of the Gonds who vied with Hindus in the fields of war and statesmanship, there were and still are the great masses of primitive peasants and forest dwellers on a cultural level no higher than that of other aboriginal populations in the Central Indian zone. Of their economics, social organization and religion, historical sources tell us next to nothing, and the study of Gond culture, as a distinct element in the culture pattern of India, falls to the anthropologist, who finds an almost overwhelming wealth of material among the many vigorous branches of the Gond family.

Spread over an area considerably larger than the British Isles and extending from the Godavari gorges in the south to the Vindhya Mountains in the north, the Gonds are neither racially, nor culturally, nor linguistically a homogeneous population. So great are the differences in custom and material circumstances between many of the widely scattered tribal groups that one may well wonder what causes them to be considered, and indeed to consider themselves, as members of the same race. Wherever we find Gonds, unless they are totally detribalized and merged with Hindu populations, they describe themselves as Gond or, if speaking Gondi, as Koitur, the universal equivalent of that name in all Gondi dialects. Were it not for those large groups of eastern Gonds, who speak Chhattisgarhi Hindi, the Gonds in the north-west of the Central Provinces, who speak western Hindi and the far smaller groups of Telugu speaking Gonds, better known as Koyas, in Hyderabad and Madras Presidency, it would probably be most satisfactory to replace, at least in ethnological usage, the general name "Gond" by the term "Gondi speaking populations," thus leaving it open whether there exists such an entity as a Gond people or only a group of peoples who to-day speak related languages. Indeed, I believe that we shall fail in

our approach to the Gond problem—one of the cardinal problems of Deccan ethnology—unless we envisage the possibility that the tribes now known as Gonds far from being the dispersed off-shoots of a once homogeneous people, attained a certain and very limited measure of cultural uniformity only when they came under the sway of the same dominant linguistic influence.

*Gondi with its many local dialects* is a Dravidian language of the so-called intermediate group, and stands, according to Grierson, closer to Tamil and Kanarese than to Telugu. But it seems highly improbable that the Dravidian tongues which were no doubt associated with the representatives of the pre-Aryan high civilizations of Southern India, should have been the original languages of tribal populations as primitive in racial and cultural make up as the Hill Marias of Bastar and certain Koyas of Hyderabad. Just as such widely separated aboriginal tribes as the Chenchus of the Nallamallai Hills, the Hill Reddis of the Eastern Ghats and some, though not all, Naikpols and Kolams in the hills of Adilabad have adopted Telugu to the exclusion of any other tongue, without anyone considering Telugu as their original language<sup>1</sup> or claiming the present language as such.

... *... with present Dravidian tongue*<sup>2</sup> in place of a Munda language, and I fully agree with his assumption that a large-scale Dravidianization of aboriginal tribes occurred partly previous and partly parallel to the Aryanization of which we are still witnesses<sup>3</sup>.

The idea that Dravidian Gondi represents a component element ... beer ... incu ... from the south between the ninth and the thirteenth century A.D. This probably goes too far and is not supported by ethnological evidence; in solving the language problem it is not even necessary to assume a wholesale migration of all the Gond tribes from Dravidian lands south of the Godavari to the Central Provinces and the hill-tracts of Bastar.

<sup>1</sup> ... is still spoken by other groups  
<sup>2</sup> Census of India, 1931, Vol. I, Part I, p. 358.  
<sup>3</sup> 1\*

language on aboriginal populations, and it seems more probable that such tribes as the Muria Gonds, with their close cultural and racial affinities to the Austroasiatic Gadabas of Orissa, were subject to a change of language than that they immigrated from distant parts of Southern India.

We are not yet in a position to surmise which population may have been responsible for the spread of Gondi or which pre-Dravidian languages Gondi may have replaced. Both questions will perhaps remain for ever unanswered, but linguistic research among the Gondi speaking peoples, the still entirely mysterious Khonds, and the neighbouring Austroasiatic tribes may still lead to surprising results. Since the days of Grierson's Linguistic Survey few trained linguists have done fieldwork among the tribal populations of Peninsular India, and the most admirable descriptive works of amateurs cannot compensate for the absence of comparative studies by experts.<sup>1</sup>

The replacement of an older language by one of more recent introduction, is an accomplished fact among many of the eastern and northern Gonds, who speak now the Chhattisgarhi dialect of Hindi and various other local dialects. But there can be no doubt that these Aryan languages were adopted from neighbouring Hindu populations instead of tribal tongues, and certain place-names are to-day the only evidence that the languages previously spoken were related to the Gondi spoken by other sections of the Gond family.

According to the Census of India the total number of Gonds in 1931<sup>2</sup> was 3,063,753. With their strong tribal consciousness they are the premier aboriginal race of India, exceeding by more than one million the number of Bhils and dwarfing such tribes as Oraons, Mundas, Hos and Santals.

The majority of Gonds—2,261,138 in 1931—are found in the Central Provinces and Berar, which contain practically all the territories known to the early Moghul writers as Gondwana. Except for Buldana in the extreme south-west, there is no district in the Central Provinces

1. The limited value of linguistic material contained in the writings of anthropologists is to none more obvious than to the authors; such texts, for instance, as given in this volume may facilitate the linguist's approach to an unwritten language, but they are insufficient as a basis for linguistic conclusions. For very relevant phonetic peculiarities may entirely escape the attention of the untrained observer, or defeat his attempts at recording them. In linguistics as in anthropology there is no substitute for field work. The dearth of authoritative works on the tribal languages of India was lamented by J. H. Hutton in his Census report: "There is, however, a serious void in our knowledge in that no intensive work appears to have been done on the tribal dialects of southern India, so that it is impossible to say whether the Munda languages ever penetrated to the extreme south of India or not. The linguistic survey unfortunately did not include southern India in its scope, and there is therefore a crying need for an intensive study of the dialects spoken by such tribes as the Kadar, Kurumans, Paliyans, Panians and Thanda Pulayans, with the object of discovering whether or no any Munda survivals are to be found." (*Op. cit.*, p. 158). Hutton's call to linguists has, to my knowledge, remained largely unheeded, M. B. Emeneau who worked among the Todas being a laudable exception. But equally urgent as the study of the tribal dialects of South India is intensive work on the tribal language of the Central belt.

2. No later figures for individual tribes are available, the Census operations of 1941 having been curtailed for reasons of economy.



[illegible]

Central India and are particularly numerous in Inlore State, to the east of the Central Provinces lie the states of Gond princes, such as Kawardha Sakti Raigarh and Sarangarh to-day known as the Chhattisgarh States. Although neither these Gond rajas nor indeed the Gonds among their subjects speak Gondi they are fully conscious of their tribal associations and the high status of the ruling princes adds no doubt to tribal prestige in the whole of Chhattisgarh.

Further south bordering on Chanda, Drug and Raipur, extend the two States of Banker and Bastar where Gonds constitute the majority of the population. Bastar in particular is the home of three important groups of Gonds, the Murias, the Hill Murias and the Bisonhorn Marias, all of which differ in language and custom very considerably from the Gonds of the Central Provinces.<sup>1</sup> Their colourful and complex cultures are representative of ancient aboriginal India and show obvious affinities with the Austroasiatic cultures of Orissa and Chota Nagpur. Bastar has also part in the Koyas or Dorlas of the Godavari area, the most southern branch of the Gond family occurring in considerable strength in Madras Presidency and Hyderabad State and stretching across the barrier of the Eastern Ghats into the vicinity of Rajahmundry. Most Koyas still speak a dialect of Gondi but those surrounded by Telugu populations have changed over to Telugu.

Another substantial group of Gonds closely akin to the Gonds of Yeotmal and Chanda is found in the hilly country between the Godavari and the Penganga Rivers constituting the Adilabad District of H. E. H. the Nizam's Dominions and it is these Gonds who form the subject of the present work.

TABLE 1. All the Gonds of Adilabad except for an insignificant overflow of

claimed by certain Gonds who have tried to raise their social status by

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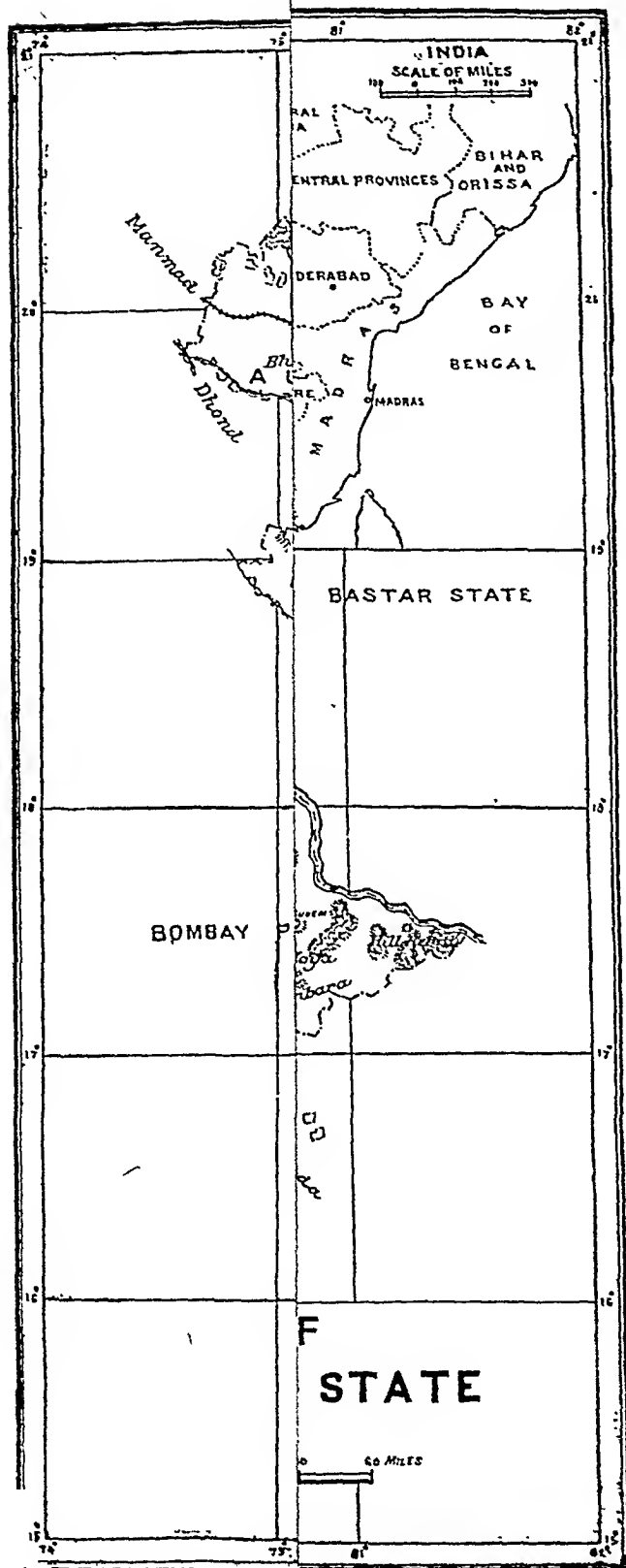
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compliance with Hindu customs, and "Raj-Gond" reform movements have made their appearance in the Central Provinces.

Various theories have been advanced to explain the distinction between Raj Gonds and the other sections of the Gond peoples. C. B. Lucie-Smith writing of the Raj Gonds of Chanda suggested that either "the epithet Raj was originally applied to royal and noble Gond families, from which the distinction spread to their followers and the governing class generally; or it may describe the leading Gond tribe which in ancient days conquered the land from other aboriginal clans."<sup>1</sup> But Captain Forsyth believed that Raj Gonds are in many cases the descendants of alliances between Rajput adventurers and Gonds, and R. V. Russell quotes this view with qualified approval.<sup>2</sup>

W. V. Grigson on the other hand lays emphasis rather on the social than the historical causes for the distinction and suggests that such names as Raj Gond arose from "the tendency, familiar throughout India, of local groups of primitive races which are gradually being Hinduized to regard themselves and to be accepted by their Hindu neighbours as separate Hindu castes under new names." The situation in Adilabad seems rather to accord with the second suggestion advanced by Lucie-Smith; for here the Raj Gonds do not form a ruling class or even a class of privileged economic status, but an entire tribal group comprising all strata of society from the feudal chiefs down to the poorest labourer. We will see in a later chapter that the once powerful Gond Kings of Chanda belonged to this group, and their kinsmen in the Adilabad hills were as early as the 17th century referred to as Raj Gonds in patents of the Emperor Aurangzeb.

Here the Raj Gonds, far from aspiring to inclusion in the Hindu fold, consider themselves the true exponents of Gond culture and Gond language, and above all of the traditional Gond religion which involves the sacrifice of cows at the rites for the clan-gods. Many of them have never met a Dhurve Gond, but those who have come in contact with the few groups of Dhurve Gonds who have recently drifted across the Chanda border, look down upon them as speaking a corrupt form of Gondi intermixed with much Marathi, and as following different customs; somewhat sweepingly and apparently unjustly they assert that the Dhurve Gonds have no cult of clan deities "only worshipping Bhimana like Kolams."

It seems indeed that the Raj Gonds of Adilabad, who have lived for almost a century and a half under Muslim rule, and have in consequence been less exposed to the influence of the more intolerant exponents of Hinduism, have retained more of their old culture than

1. *Report of the Land Revenue Settlement of the Chanda District, Central Provinces, 1869, Nagpur 1870*, p. 46.

2. *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*, London 1916. Vol. III, p. 63.

3. W. V. Grigson. *The Maria Gonds of Bastar*, London, 1928 p. 36.

most of their tribesmen in the Central Provinces

In order to understand the historical position of the Gonds both in Hyderabad and in the Central Provinces we must briefly review the course of political events during the last five centuries, and in doing so, anticipate the fuller discussion of historical developments contained in Book II

Reliable information on the early history of the Gonds is scarce and not until Muslim times do Gond states figure in contemporary chronicles and the works of historians. There can indeed be little doubt that throughout ancient and medieval times the larger part of the Gond country east of Berar remained a land of vast forests and poor communications. Few foreign travellers seem to have traversed it and the old literature contains but the scantiest references to its inhabitants. Yet its wildness should not be exaggerated. Buddhist relics have been found in various places and it is not unlikely that there were times when pioneers of advanced civilizations settled among the aboriginal tribesmen just as there were periods when such outposts of higher culture shrank into

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capital visited in the seventh century by Hiuen Tsiang<sup>1</sup>. In Bhandak has also been discovered an inscription of the Rashtrakuta King Krishna I the builder of the Kailasa Temple at Ellora dealing with the grant of a village when the king was camping in Yeotmal<sup>2</sup>. From Buddhist times date also the Pandrolena cave temples at Mahur in the westernmost corner of the Adilabad District and the famous Dev Doshwar temple at Mahur—mentioned in the Garur Purana and for the last seven centuries under the guardianship of monks of the Mahanu bhau sect—proves that Mahur formerly known as Matapur, retained its importance into Hindu times.

From inscriptions and old coins we know moreover that from the 6th century A.D. onwards Rajput princes were established in various parts of the Central Provinces. Tripura the heart of the later Gond kingdom of Garha Mandla and Chh.

We must therefore turn to the early Muslim writers who from the 14th century on comment in their chronicles on campaign and political developments in the territories described by them as Gond

1. S. Beal, *Buddhist Record of the Western World* London 1906 Vol. II pp. 209-214.—  
R. B. H. & L. Lal, *Prehistoric Berar Sharadashram Varanasi* Vol. I, Yeotmal, 1933 pp. 2, 3

2. Hiralal Jua, *Materials for Historic Research in Berar Sharadashram Varanasi* Vol. I p. 12.

wana.<sup>1</sup> The dawn of the 15th century finds a Gond dynasty firmly established in Garha, close to the Narbada River and Jubbulpore. The Maharajas of Garha exercised overlordship over the local Gond petty chieftains of the present districts of Jubbulpore, Mandla, Seoni, Chhindwara and Balaghat, Damoh, and parts of Hoshangabad and Betul, and retained their independence until the year 1564 A.D., when a Moghul army under Asaf Khan conquered Garha and the famous queen-regent Durgavati was slain in battle. After a period of administration by Mahommedan officers or jagirdars, the government reverted to all practical purposes to the Gond Rajas of the old family and their subordinate chiefs, who had, however, to recognize the sovereignty of the Moghul emperors. The end of the Gond dynasty of Garha came in 1780 A.D. when the Marathas imprisoned the last ruler and brought the state under direct control. South and west of Garha another Gond State arose early in the 17th century: the Kingdom of Deogarh. Its rulers, tributaries of the Maharajas of Garha, took advantage of the decline of their overlords' power subsequent to the Moghul conquest and secured for themselves a large part of the territories of Garha.

The third great Gond dynasty of the Central Provinces was that of Chanda, and it is this dynasty with which we are most directly concerned in our study of the Gonds of Hyderabad. For the Rajas of Chanda ruled over a large part of what is to-day the Adilabad District and many of the Hyderabad Gonds still recognize their authority in tribal matters. When the chieftains residing at Chanda, a fortified town on the banks of the Wardha River, first attained prominence cannot be said for certain. C. U. Wills, the author of a history of the Gond dynasties of Garha-Mandla and Deogarh<sup>2</sup> declares that for the south of the Central Provinces, namely Chanda and Bastar, the record of events is so meagre and inconsistent that he despaired of compiling a local history of any kind. He evidently considers the historical data contained in C. B. Lucie-Smith's *Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Chanda District, Central Provinces*, 1869, entirely unreliable and based on late Brahmanical fabrications of a kind similar to the Ramnagar inscription of Mandla whose trustworthiness he has convincingly refuted.<sup>3</sup> The chronicle of the Chanda Rajas, as outlined by Lucie-Smith, is no doubt largely legendary and the date 870 A.D. for the establishment of the Gond dynasty as well as most of the subsequent dates belong to the realm of imagination. Notwithstanding its character as a fairly recent fabrication by Brahmins attached to the court of Chanda, the chronicle contains,

1. I do not propose to add to the unconvincing derivations of the names 'Gond' and 'Gondwana,' then appearing for the first time in literature, and confess that I have to offer no explanation for these terms, which have their origin in none of the Gondi dialects.

2. *The Raj Gond Maharajas of the Satpura Hills*, Nagpur, 1925.

3. *Op. cit.* pp. 13-24.—The Ramnagar inscription, which was found 10 miles north-east of Mandla, is written in Sanskrit and professes to give the family tree of the Gond Rajas of Garha, tracing back the dynasty through 54 generations.

a number of traditions which are probably of considerable age and not entirely without foundation. Thus it reports that the first Gond Raja of Chanda was of Atram clan and that the fortress of Manikgarh, which lies in the hills of Rajura Taluq was his main stronghold. Of one of his descendants, Hir Sing the chronicle says that he first "levied an impost on occupied ground, while previous to his accession land had been like air, untaxed and free to all",—this seems to reflect the memory of a time when the Gonds paid not land revenue but nominal tribute to their tribal chieftains. The stories of various encounters between the later Rajas of Chanda and the Emperors of Delhi are in line with the epics still sung by the Pardhans the bards of the Raj Gonds of Adilabad, but we reach firmer ground when we find Chanda mentioned in the *Ain-i-Akbari* of Abul Fazl. Chanda, like the other Gond states, then formed part of the Moghul empire, and when during Shah Jahan's reign Khan Dauran undertook an expedition against rebellious Gonds of Deccan he

... to the Gond Rajas, and carried to the treasury at Aurangabad." Some of the Gonds of the Adilabad highlands still possess patents (*sanads*) bestowed upon their ancestors by Aurangzeb and according to these documents Utnur Taluq belonged then to the *subah* of Bidar and not to Berar. After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 A.D. the Gond Rajas seem to have repudiated their allegiance to the Emperor of Delhi, but their newly gained

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himself at Nagpur in 1739 he undertook the conquest of the Gond States and in 1749 the city of Chanda fell to a besieging Maratha army. For two years a shadow of power remained to the Gond Raja, but in 1751 the state was incorporated in the Bhonsla Kingdom, and the ruler Nilkant Shah was imprisoned. In recounting the end of the Chanda kingdom Lucie Smith pays tribute to the achievement of its ancient dynasty "Originally petty Chiefs of a savage tribe, they spread their sway over a wide dominion reclaiming and

... they left, if we forget the few last years, a well governed and contented kingdom, adorned with admirable works of engineering skill, and prosperous to a point no after time has reached

1 *Gazetteer for the Hyderabad Assigned Districts (Berar)* edited in 1870 by A. Lyall

2 As mentioned above the chronology accepted by Lucie Smith is subject to doubt, but though no definite period for their reign can be given, the prominence of the chiefly house of Chanda is certainly of considerable antiquity

Other dynasties in the great drama of Indian story have played parts far more striking, but few have deserved so well of those they governed as the ancient house whose power passed away with Nilkant Shah."<sup>1</sup> The respect commanded by the chiefly house among their Gond subjects can be judged by the influence the rajas retained even when their secular power came to an end, for they continued to function as tribal headmen and their authority in all questions concerning custom and ritual remained unimpaired.

Until 1853, when the whole of the Nagpur State was taken under British administration, Raghoji's descendants ruled over Chanda, but the tract west of the Wardha river, containing the important fortress of Manikgarh and constituting to-day the Rajura Taluq, was ceded to the *Subahs* of the Deccan by the treaty of Deogaon in 1803 A.D.,<sup>2</sup> and has ever since formed part of the Nizam's Dominions.

From the scanty historical information available on the Chanda Kingdom it is not clear how far it extended towards the south west. Manikgarh Fort is frequently mentioned as one of the main strongholds of the Chanda Rajas, but no data appear to exist on the rest of the hill-tracts of the present Adilabad District. A family of Kumra clan now living in Utnur taluq claims descent from Gond chieftains who once held the Mahur fortress and it is possible that the Chanda Rajas exerted at one time or other overlordship over the whole of the Gond country between the Penganga and the Godavari, but written history affords no proof for such an assumption and we will have to reconsider this question later in the light of local tradition. For certain we know only that in the years before the conclusion of the treaty of Deogaon, the territory now forming the taluqs of Sirpur, Chinnur, Asifabad, Lakshetipet, Utnur, Adilabad and Both, *i.e.*, practically the whole of the Adilabad District except the taluqs of Rajura and Nirmal was included in Berar,<sup>3</sup> which was then jointly administered by the Nizam and the Bhonsla Raja of Nagpur. We know too that this territory contains a number of ruined forts, inferior it is true, to that of Manikgarh, but not unlike it in style, and that these are believed to have been the seats of

1. *Op. cit.*, pp. 69, 70.

2. C. U. Wills, *British Relations with the Nagpur State in the 18th century*, Nagpur 1924, p. 248-251.

3. Under the Bahmani Kings the province of Berar was larger than it is to-day and extended as far South as the Godavari. In 1480 A.D. during the reign of Muhammed Shah III and the prime-ministership of the famous Persian Mahmud Gawan, it was divided into two sub-provinces: Gawil and Mahur. The latter included the whole of the present Yeotmal District as well as the tract between the Penganga, Pranhita and Godavari Rivers, now forming the Adilabad District of Hyderabad. During the disturbances following the execution of Mahmud Gawan, the Governor of Gawil declared his independence and founded the Imad Shahi kingdom of Berar, annexing also the sub-province of Mahur, which had remained a separate administrative unit only for fifteen years. Cf. Syed Abdur Razzaque, 'Divisions of Berar,' *Sharadashram Varshik*, Vol. I, 1944, pp. 47-51. It is very unlikely, however, that the Imad Shahi Kings were able to establish effective rule in the hill-tracts of Adilabad. Nothing is known about their relations with the neighbouring Gond Rajas of Chanda, nor about the circumstances under which the present Rajura Taluq with the fort of Manikgarh was again separated from Berar and included in the domain of the Chanda Kings.

local Gond Rajas. As to the political status of these petty chieftains vis à vis the Raja of Chanda on the one side and the Nizam and the Rajas of Nagpur on the other the chronicles are silent. None of the early European travellers whose records shed a certain amount of light on other parts of the Deccan seem to have visited this hill tract, and the confusion on Rennell's map of 1780 A.D.<sup>1</sup> shows that it was then still largely *terra incognita*. However, a short reference to the present Adilabad District is contained in the account of Captain J. T. Blunt, who travelled in 1795 through Chanda and Bastar and then crossed the Godavari into the Samasthan of the Raja of Palonchra.<sup>2</sup> He mentions a trade route running from Chanda through Chinnur and Palonchra to Rajahmundry; he did not follow this himself but kept further east, 'skirting along the east side of the Seerpur Pargunnah' which evidently corresponds to the present Sirpur Taluq. According to Blunt "the districts adjoining to the eastern parts of the *Mahratta* territory," through which he passed on that occasion "were at this time under Jukut Row, a *Goand* chief who had formerly been the principal *Rajah* in the southern parts of *Goandwaanah* and who held them as a *Jagheer* from the *Berar* government." He is a *sardar* of five hundred horse in the *Mahratta* service, and was at this time absent, in command of an expedition against the districts of Adilabad and Neermul belonging to the Nizam; these are separated from Chanda only by a range of hills the passes of which had been already secured to prevent supplies of grain being carried into the enemy's country.<sup>3</sup> At the time of Captain Blunt's journey the Nizam was at war with the Maratha Empire and it appears from his account that the Gonds of the frontier districts were drawn into the struggle. This tallies with the local tradition among the Gonds of Utnur Taluq, who tell of a war in which they fought on the side of the Subedar of Nirmal against the Maratha Kings of Nagpur. Another remark of Captain Blunt tends also to show that these frontier tracts then only lightly held by the Nizam's forces were often the scene of fighting and unrest. Thus referring to the present taluq of Chinnur, he writes as follows: "The Purgunnah I should first enter upon subject to the Nizam was Chinnoor, the capital to which bearing the same name is situated on the north bank of the river Godavari. I was informed that this was the only inhabited place in the whole district, for the Zameendar who rented the country, having rebelled about seven

1. Reproduced in C. U. Wells, *British Relations with the Nagpur State in the 18th Century* Nagpur 1926.

2. As late as 1853 the highlands and jungle cover on our maps." Quoted in

3. Naive of a in Early European Travellers in the Nagpur Territory, Nagpur 1924.

4. Op. cit. pp. 143-144.



years before, the *Nizam* had sent a large body of troops to subdue him; but not being able to get possession of his person, had laid waste the country, and had encouraged his vassal to pillage it likewise. This warfare had continued about four years, when the refractory Zameendar was at last betrayed by his own adherents, and murdered; after which all his strongholds were reduced. But the calamity occasioned by this scene of rapine, and murder, fell heaviest upon the peasantry, who had fled and sought refuge in the neighbouring districts and, for the last three years, there had not been an inhabitant in the whole district, excepting a few matchlockmen in the fort of Chinnoor."<sup>1</sup> We do not know whether the Zamindar of Chinnoor was a Gond chief, but there can be no doubt that the turbulent conditions in this and other frontier areas had very serious repercussions on the local Gond population, which probably withdrew more and more into the hills and forests.<sup>2</sup>

None of the standard works on the history of Hyderabad contains any reference to the developments in the area now constituting the Adilabad District subsequent to the treaty of Deogaon in 1803, when the important taluq of Rajura was added to the Nizam's Dominions, and all my attempts to obtain relevant information from unpublished records or historical treatises in Urdu, have remained unsuccessful. Such records may exist in collections of old Persian documents, but to unearth them and reconstruct with their help the history of the district in the early 19th century would be a lengthy task.<sup>3</sup> It is safe to assume, however, that Hyderabad rule did not bring about any immediate change in the existing order. Until 1866 the present district of Adilabad was a sub-district consisting of two divisions: the taluq of Adilabad, then called Edlabad, and a division comprising the taluqs of Sirpur and Rajura; the revenues of Edlabad and Sirpur were farmed out and Rajura was a jagir taluq granted for the payment of troops. Thus Government control was comparatively light and interfered little with the customary mode of life of the population. The officer at the head of the district was called *Amaldar* and very old men still talk of the days of the *Amaldari* when the Gonds enjoyed the use of the land untrammelled by forest-laws, and the revenue was, at least in the hill-tracts, no more than a nominal cess.

But gradually the administration was tightened, communications were improved and Government encouraged the influx of new settlers into tracts hitherto the undisputed domain of the aborigines. The effects

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 142.

2. Cf. R. V. Russel's remark on the fate of the Gonds under Maratha rule: ".....the Gonds were driven to take refuge in the inaccessible highlands, where the Marathas continued to pillage and harass them, until they obtained an acknowledgement of their supremacy and the promise of an annual tribute. Under such treatment the hill Gonds soon lost every vestige of civilization, and became the cruel treacherous savages depicted by travellers of this period....." (*Imperial Gazetteer of India, Central Provinces*, Calcutta 1908, p. 159.)

3. Mr. W. V. Grigson, I.C.S., tells me that he failed to find in the old records of the Hyderabad Residency any reference to conditions in the country which is now the Adilabad District.

on the economic and social position of the Gonds were far reaching, and the repercussions attendant on the opening up of the District will be discussed in Book II, while reference to the newly established culture-contacts with non aboriginal immigrants from both Telengana and Marathwara are continued in Chapter III.

In 1941 the Gonds of Hyderabad numbered 141,335, which is only a fraction of India's entire Gond population of more than 3 000 000. If we remember that this is about ten times the strength of the aboriginal population of the Australian continent at the time of discovery and far exceeds in numbers the Red Indians in North America, it is indeed surprising to find only a slender volume of literature on this remarkable group of peoples.

The first reference to the Gonds in scientific literature is perhaps the small list of Gondi words communicated in 1844 by Dr. Voysey to the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*.<sup>2</sup> A somewhat larger one, together with a few grammatical notes was given in 1847 by Dr. O. Manager,<sup>3</sup> and the following year B. H. Hodgson published in the same journal a comparative vocabulary of Dravidian dialects containing among others Gondi and Oraon words.<sup>4</sup> Fuller though by no means complete are the grammar and vocabulary of the Gondi spoken in the Chindwara District, compiled by the Rev. James Dawson in 1872.<sup>5</sup>

But the earliest ethnological account of the Gonds is contained in the Rev. Stephen Hislop's remarkable *Papers on the Aboriginal Tribes of the Central Provinces* edited by Sir R. Temple in 1866. This book, though somewhat confusing in the presentation of material, is a mine of information for the initiated and will be of permanent value for its very full version of a cycle of Gond myths both in Gondi and English. Fairly lengthy notes on various sections of Gonds are found in the administrative reports and papers of several of Hislop's contemporaries notably Captain C. I. R. Glasford,<sup>6</sup> Major C. B. Lucie-Smith,<sup>7</sup> Sir R. Temple,<sup>8</sup> Sir C. Grant,<sup>9</sup> and Col. Ward,<sup>10</sup> but the information contained in these is of very uneven character. The next impor-

1. Vol. XIII p. 19.

2. *Ibid.* Vol. XVI p. 236.

3. "The Aborigines of Central India," *ibid.* Vol. XVII Part I pp. 350-558.

4. *Ibid.* Vol. XXXIX, pp. 106-117, 172-198.

5. Nagpur 1866.

6. Report on the Dependency of Bazar 1862, Selection from Records of the Government of India Foreign Department No. XXXIX, Calcutta 1863; Report on Land Revenue Settlement of Upper Cudjpur District, Nagpur 1868.

7. Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of Chanda District, Nagpur 1860.

8. Report on the Administration of the Central Provinces up to August 1862. (Reprint) Nagpur 1923; Report on the Zamindari and other Petty Chieftaincies in the Central Provinces in 1863 (Reprint) Nagpur 1923.

9. Gazetteer of the Central Provinces, Nagpur 1876.

10. Mandla Settlement Report 1868.

tant contribution to the ethnology of the Gonds were the articles by the Rev. J. Cain, who spent a lifetime among the Koyas of the Godavari valley and published reliable, though limited information on their culture and their peculiar dialect, which is strongly influenced by Telugu.<sup>1</sup>

After the publication of these pioneer works interest in the Gonds waned and except for some useful notes in Captain J. Forsyth's *The Highlands of Central India*,<sup>2</sup> the usual paragraphs on population in various District Gazetteers published in the early years of the 20th century, and in the Census of India, 1901, little of any relevance was written on the tribe during the next fifty years. Then followed the publication of Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India*, which contains in Volume IV,<sup>3</sup> a discussion of the position of Gondi among the Dravidian languages, and of E. Thurston's *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*<sup>4</sup> with a useful article on the Koyas. More complete than any previous account of Gonds is R. V. Russell's article 'Gond' in *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*<sup>5</sup> but even this suffers to some extent from the faults of all such compilations, and, though full of interesting details, fails to draw a clear distinction between the individual Gond tribes.

C. G. Chevenix Trench's *Grammar of Gondi*,<sup>6</sup> on the other hand, is a work of great thoroughness and is as yet the most systematic description of a Gondi dialect. While confined to the language of Betul and the surrounding area, it is also a useful guide to the study of other Gondi dialects, and its collection of legends, stories and songs lends it considerable ethnological value.

Another approach to the Gond problem was made by C. U. Wills, the author of *The Raj-Gond Maharajas of the Satpura Hills*<sup>7</sup> and the *Territorial System of the Rajput Kingdoms of Mediaeval Chattisgarh*.<sup>8</sup> Wills' writings are mainly based on early Mohammedan sources, and throughout his history of the Gond states of the Central Provinces, he relies only on the authority of written documents, excluding, as it would seem consciously, all ethnological material. His book on the Raj-Gond Maharajas, while an excellent compilation of old records, suffers there-

1. "The Bhadrachalam Taluka. Godavari District. S. India" *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. V. 1876.—  
"The Bhadrachalam and Rekapalli Talukas" *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. VIII, 1879, and Vol. X. 1881.—  
"The Koi a Southern Tribe of the Gond." *Journal Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. XIII, 1881.

2. New edition, London 1839.—Forsyth gives in this book a poetical version of the Lingo myth, which is based on Hislop's text.

3. *Munda and Dravidian Languages*, Calcutta 1906.

4. Madras 1909.

5. London 1916, Vol. III, pp. 39-143.

6. Madras 1919.

7. Nagpur 1913.

8. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. XV, 1919, pp. 197-262.

fore from a certain one sidedness, it does not, for instance, give even the clan names of the Gond rajahs of Garha Mandla, Deogarh and Chanda.

The Census reports of 1931 contain various useful notes on the Gonds<sup>1</sup> and among them a detailed description of the Murri's dormitory system by W V Grigson. But it was not until 1938 that the same author gave us with his book *The Maria Gonds of Bastar*<sup>2</sup> the first full-scale monograph on any section of the Gond race. In the Introduction to this important volume which puts the Bastar Gonds at last on the ethnographic map J H Hutton expresses astonishment "that Indian administrators and British anthropologists should have had to wait a century for any detailed authoritative account of the Gonds of Central India." This sentiment must be shared by all who consider that during that same cent

side prevented much suffering and many misfortunes, at least, that is if it had led to the taking of measures in their interests such as Mr Grigson was able to initiate in Bastar State during the term of his office there as Admin.

side Gonds both in publication of various papers by D N Mjumdar<sup>3</sup> and M P Buradkar<sup>4</sup> and of an excellent grammar of the Maria language by A N Mitchell.<sup>5</sup> But by far the most important contribution to Gond studies since the publication of Grigson's monograph has come from Verrier Elwin. Already his earlier popular books<sup>6</sup> have given us a vivid picture of the Gonds of the Central Provinces while his monograph *The Agaria*<sup>7</sup> contain many and *Swicide*<sup>8</sup> is a fascinating

1 Notes on the Aboriginal Tribes of the Central Provinces. Census of India 1931 Vol I Part III Series B—W H Shoberl ed as Vol XII Central Provinces and Berar Part I Report.

2 London 1938.

3 *Tribal Cultures and Customs* on Presidential Address Anthropology Section of the Indian Science Congress, 1939.—*Racial Affiliations of the Gonds of the Central Provinces* *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Bengal* Vol VII 1961 pp 35-56.

4 Totemism among the Gonds *Man in India* Vol XX 1940 pp 114-143 268-289.—Kinship among the Gonds *Nagpur University Journal* 1940 No 6 pp 147-180.

5 *A Grammar of Maria Gondi* Jagdalpur 1942.

6 *Leaves from the Jungle* London 1936.—*Phantom of the Hills, a tale of the Gonds*, London 1937.—*A Cloud that's Done with* London 1938.

7 Bombay 1942.

8 Bombay 1943.

and many of Elwin's recent articles deal partly or entirely with Gonds.<sup>1</sup> Numerous specimens of the oral literature of Gondwana are recorded in Elwin's excellent collections *Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal* and *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*<sup>2</sup> and Shamrao Hivale, the co-author of the latter book, has made a valuable contribution to our knowledge of Gond culture by his monograph *The Pardhans of the Upper Narbhada Valley*.<sup>3</sup> But the most important work so far written on any Gond tribe is Verrier Elwin's monumental volume, *The Muria and their Gotul*.<sup>4</sup>

Grigson's and Elwin's great monographs both deal with the Gonds of Bastar, and no comparable account exists of the Raj Gonds of the Central Provinces and Hyderabad.<sup>5</sup> While perhaps less colourful than the hill-folks of Bastar, they occupy so important and central a position among the Gondi speaking tribes that lacking a detailed knowledge of Raj Gond culture and tradition we seem far from a solution of the Gond problem.

It was this idea which first led me to the study of the Raj Gonds in the country between the Godavari and the Penganga. When I had completed my work among the Hill Reddis of the Eastern Ghats it might have seemed logical to embark on a study of the Koyas, who are the immediate neighbours of the Reddis both on the Hyderabad and on the British side of the Godavari. For this would have rounded off the work among those aboriginal tribes of the Nizam's Dominions which lie entirely within the Telugu sphere. But judging from my limited experience of Koyas, both Gondi and Telugu speaking, I felt that it would be difficult to understand their cultural life without some knowledge of Gond culture in an area less exposed to the influence of a dominant alien civilization. So I turned northwards to where the Adilabad District, with its more than 70,000 Gonds, promised a rich field for ethnological research. I hoped that a study of these Gonds would lead more directly to the heart of the Gond problem than work among the Koyas on the periphery of the Gondi speaking area.

In December 1941 my wife and I arrived in Asifabad and undertook an informative tour through the three taluqs Asifabad, Utnur and Rajura. Travelling on foot westwards through the Pedda Vagu valley as far as Kerimeri we gained a first impression of villages where Gonds

1. 'I married a Gond,' *Man in India*, Vol. XX, 1940, pp. 228-255,—'Primitive Ideas on Menstruation and the Climacteric in Central India,' in *Essays in Anthropology presented to R. B. Sarat Chandra Roy*, Lucknow 1942, pp. 141-157,—'Conception, Pregnancy and Birth among the Tribesman of the Maikal Hills,' *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Bengal*, Vol. IX., 1943, pp. 99-148,—'The Attitude of Indian Aborigines to Sexual Impotence,' *Man in India*, Vol. XXIII, 1943, pp. 127-146,—'Folklore of the Bastar Clan-Gods,' *Man*, Vol. XLIII, 1943, pp. 97-104,—'Stilt-Walking among the Murias of Bastar State,' *Man* Vol. XLIV, 1944, pp. 38-41.

2. Bombay 1944.

3. Bombay 1945.

4. Bombay 1947.

5. Syed Siraj-ul-Hassan's *The Castes and Tribes of H.E.H. the Nizam's Dominions* (Bombay 1920) contains only a brief article on the Raj Gonds of Adilabad District, pp. 216-232.

live side by side with Kolams as well as with non aboriginal settlers, then climbed to the higher plateau and were fortunate enough to watch a clan god feast at Pangri. On our way from Pangri to Utnur we passed Marlavai and decided on this village as our future base camp. Early in February we went to the Keslapur Jatra, a great Gond feast and fair, held annually fifteen miles north west of Utnur. From there we turned north and then east into Rajura Taluq where we visited the famous fort of Manikgarh now deserted and overgrown by jungle. Camping in various villages of the higher plateau we gathered piecemeal information from both Gonds and Kolams and by the end of our tour realized that a study of the aboriginals of Adilabad might lead to the very heart of the Gond problem.

A slightly embarrassing circumstance during our first tour was the rapidly spreading rumour that I was a recruiting officer and had come to take young Gonds to the war. The general excitement following the Japanese invasion of Malaya, had reached even the Gonds and they interpreted my taking of notes and photographs as a preliminary selection of all the fittest men. And when at the same time the Director General of Revenue visited Adilabad and Utnur they took our tours for a concerted movement and thought the lorries with his camp kit were meant to carry off the recruits. The result was that the camp kit was passed by and the recruits were never seen.

But once we were soon faced by a difficulty of exactly the opposite nature. For now rumour ran that I was a revenue officer, specially sent to the District to investigate the grievances of Gonds, Kolams and Naik pods and to give land to all those whom the influx of new settlers had rendered landless. All through the hot weather and the greater part of the rains aboriginals from all parts of the district, some in delegations of thirty and forty, flocked to Marlavai all wanting their difficulties heard and remedied. Unable to give them any concrete assistance I had at least to listen to their tales of woe and many a day passed when the only anthropological information I could gather was the result of the resulting invariability of the aboriginal life.

Our tours led us to the surrounding villages and ultimately to the Tilam area as far as Rompalli and Mangi. We left the district at Christmas and returned again early in March 1943 when we toured the taluqs of Both Kinwat and Adilabad, reaching Marlavai in the middle of April. While in Hyderabad I had succeeded in obtaining the sanction of H.E.H. the Nizam's Government for a Gond Education

1. A full account of the conditions then prevailing in the Adilabad District is contained in my reports and diaries published under the title *Tribes of Hyderabad* by the Revenue Department, Government of H.E.H. the Nizam, Hyderabad 1945.

Scheme under which instruction in reading and writing Gondi and later Marathi and Urdu was to be provided for both children and adults. On my return to Marlavai we started work on a small scale with a school where adult Gonds were to be trained as teachers and village-officers. The work on this Scheme kept us in Marlavai until the end of January 1944, and it was there that most of the chapters contained in Book I were written. After an absence of five months in Assam, we returned in the rains for a short period and this gave me the opportunity of checking my Gondi texts with the help of the Headmaster of the Marlavai Training Centre Mr. S. B. Jogalkar and the Gond teachers, some of whom had meanwhile opened schools in their own villages.<sup>1</sup>

The division of the present work into two books was necessitated by its bulk and by the fact that a sudden opportunity for two expeditions into one of the least known tribal areas of the North-East Frontier prevented us from concentrating on the completion of the second part.

In the presentation of facts we have departed from the usual order of a straight monograph: instead of grouping them under such headings as material culture, agriculture, or religion, we have attempted an arrangement which, we hope, will give a better idea of Gond life as an organic entity. After the introductory chapters, which describe the physical and cultural environment, we have set a section outlining the mythical background of Gond culture and the cult of the clan-deities; for in this cult and the sacred myths lies the mainspring of the social order. Then follows a section describing the economic and ritual activities of a village community throughout the cycle of the year, and the three chapters of this section contain also most of the information on agriculture, the basis of Gond economics. Book II will open with an account of the phases of life, from childhood to death, and this will set the stage for a general discussion of the social organization and the principles of Gond religion, all details of ritual having been described already in their proper setting. The old feudal system looms still in the background of the social order, and I am attempting a reconstruction based on the existing remnants and local traditions contained mainly in the stories and songs of Pardhans. Read together with Wills' history of the Gond States of the Central Provinces this will perhaps give a certain idea of political and social life prevailing in Gondwana throughout the greater part of mediæval times.

The final chapters of the book will be concerned with the developments of the last fifty years, when increased contact with other populations broke up the Gonds' feudal organization and land-hungry immigrants drove many families from the lands where they had lived since the times of their ancestors. It is a dismal tale of the decline of a once proud and happy people, the loss of economic freedom, and the birth

<sup>1</sup>. Cf. my article 'Aboriginal Education in Hyderabad.' *The Indian Journal of Social Work*, Vol. V., 1944.

of a timid and resigned outlook in place of the manly spirit of old. Finally I propose to discuss the results of the more liberal policy towards the aborigines which H.L.H. the Nizam's Government has

their own ancient culture

In an account of a culture as rich and complex as that of the Raj Gonds the anthropologist must needs concentrate on certain aspects, and in this book I have given first place to the Gonds' mythology and their complex ritual sanctioned and sustained in almost every phase by mythical precedents. This part of Gond culture is rapidly disintegrating and its study, still possible in the hills of Utnur and Asifabad Taluqs, would come too late in the more open parts of the District. Problems of psychology and the more intimate matters of the individual's life, on the other hand are only fleetingly touched upon, but I believe that changes in this sphere are not as rapid and the time left for their study is consequently far less limited.

Although this book is not a treatise on linguistics, Gond texts of some length have found a place in many chapters. I noted them when collecting my material and as they are the first recorded specimens of the peculiar Gond dialect spoken in Adilabad. I do not feel justified in withholding them from the student of Indian languages. All have been checked and rechecked with several informants but this is no guarantee of absolute accuracy, for Gonds like the speakers of most unwritten languages, are often careless about rules of grammar and not very sensitive to slight slips in a text read out to them. The recording process is

the sound. Diacritical signs have been used to indicate the

describing the German *ch* in Bach (pronounced like the composer). This sound occurs mainly in words of Marathi origin, and in such words most Gonds not familiar with Marathi pronounce it not as *sh* but *h*, examples are *shah* (king) *shahar* (city)

grammar, I have used *w* for all *v* sounds, except in proper names occurring in the English text, and in words borrowed from Hindi in which *v* is



more familiar. Deviating from Trench, who employs double-consonants to indicate the shortness of the preceding vowels, thus spelling *wittana* (to run) in contrast to *witana* (to sow), I have dispensed with double-consonants; in words such as *wattana* (to put) the two consonants represent different sounds. Diacritical signs are confined to the Gondi texts, and are not used when an italicized Gondi word occurs in the English text.<sup>1</sup>

Those familiar with Gondi will notice that the language spoken by the Raj Gonds of Adilabad differs both from the Betul Gondi of Trench's Grammar and the Gondi spoken in South Chanda outlined by the Rev. S. B. Patwardhan.<sup>2</sup> A distinctive feature of Adilabad Gondi is the frequent substitution of an initial *s* for the initial *h* of both the Betul and the Chanda dialects. Thus the Adilabad Gond pronounces *surana* (to see) instead of *hurana*, and 'no' is *sile* in Adilabad but *halle* in Betul. While in the nominative the Gonds of Betul usually drop the initial *n* inherent in the first and second person of the personal pronoun and say *ana* (I) and *imma* (thou) the Gonds of Adilabad use the full form *nana* (I) and *nime* (thou).

The Gondi of southern Chanda described by Patwardhan, follows in the choice of the initial *s* and *h* the Betul usage, but has often *l* where both Adilabad and Betul Gonds pronounce *r*. Thus the Chanda Gond, like the Hill Maria says *lon* (house), while the Adilabad Gond pronounces the word clearly with *r*, *ron*.

Further comparisons between the three dialects would be beyond the scope of this work, but although Betul Gondi contains a good many words not familiar to the Gonds of Adilabad and probably *vice-versa*, and the language of South Chanda is strongly influenced by Telugu, speakers of the three dialects have on the whole no great difficulty in understanding each other.

Raj Gonds of Adilabad on the other hand find it almost impossible to understand or make themselves understood to Hill Marias of Chanda but in going through the texts given in Grigson's *The Maria Gonds of Bastar* I found that with a knowledge of Adilabad Gondi it is easy to recognize many Maria words, some being identical and most very similar in both dialects. The pronunciation and intonation seem however, to be so divergent that to those familiar with the Adilabad idiom Maria is more easily understood written than spoken. Ethnologically it would be extremely important to ascertain the affinities of those words in the Bastar dialects which do not occur in the Gondi of the Central Provinces

1. The student of Dravidian languages will find an extensive selection of Gondi texts in Nagri script in the series "Hyderabad Gondi Literature," which I am editing in collaboration with Mr. S. B. Jogalkar for use in Gond schools. So far the following numbers have been published: *Hyderabad Gondi Reading Chart for Adults* 1, 2, and 3 (Hyderabad, 1943); *First Reader for Adults* containing stories and Riddles (Hyderabad 1944); *Gondi Primer* (Hyderabad 1944); *First Gondi Reader* (Hyderabad 1946); *Three Epic Poems* (Hyderabad 1946); *The Legend of the Sarpe Folk* (Hyderabad 1947); *The Myth of Manke* (Hyderabad 1946).

and Hyderabad. If any pre Dravidian substratum in the languages of the Hill Marias and the Muriyas could be discovered we would indeed be a long step nearer to the solution of the Gond problem, which cannot be solved by ethnology alone but only by a concerted effort of ethnological linguistic, and anthropometric research.

The time for such a synthesis of Gond studies has perhaps not yet come and linguistics as well as physical anthropology have still to make their full contribution. To the ethnologist in the meantime falls the task of detailed investigations into all the regional branches of Gond culture, and such a regional study is presented in the following chapters.

PART I.  
THE MATERIAL AND CULTURAL MILIEU.

## CHAPTER I.

### ENVIRONMENT.

THE territory inhabited by the Raj Gonds of Hyderabad is easily defined. Its boundaries coincide almost exactly with those of the Adilabad District and are, except for a stretch of less than forty miles in the west, formed throughout by rivers: the Penganga from the great Sasarakunda Falls down to its confluence with the Wardha to the west and north, the Wardha and Pranhita to the north-east and east, and the Godavari to the south. Only the western border of the Gonds' habitat, running from the Sasarakunda Falls southwards to the Godavari, cuts across hill and plain without following a water course. While south of the Godavari, in the adjoining Districts of Karimnagar, Raj Gonds are found only in a few villages close to the river-bank, they extend north of the Penganga deep into Berar, and north-east and east into the Central Provinces.

Some 130 miles in length and of an average breadth of 60 miles, the Adilabad District comprises several of the main landscape-types of the Deccan: wide cultivated plains with little tree-growth other than an occasional group of mango or tamarind trees that mark a village site; rolling uplands where broad valleys, chequered with fields, alternate with low, wooded ridges; and finally the higher hills, which form the backbone of the district and are to-day the main domain of the Gonds; they extend roughly from the railway line between Mancherial and Balharshah westwards to the Nirmal-Adilabad road, and gradually losing height stretch across the road almost as far as the Penganga.

Geologically the area consists of a basement of Archæan granite on which rest unconformably sandstones, shales and limestones belonging to the Penganga group of the upper Pre-Cambrian. To the east the low ground is occupied by faulted bands of Gondwana (Permian to Jurassic) near the base of which two or three coal seams are worked. The Deccan trap overlies all these formations and is responsible for spreads of laterite on the tops of the highest hills round Manikgarh and for the rich black cotton soil in most of the depressions of the deeply dissected plateau.

Apart from the great rivers enclosing it on three sides, there are few perennial streams in the district, and the only three of any importance are the Kaddam River, with the lovely Pochera and Kuntala Falls, a tributary of the Godavari, and the Pedda Vagu and Moar Rivers which dissect the eastern part of the central hill-block and flow united into the

**Pranhita** Most other streams dry up during April and May, and in many of the upland villages water is scarce during the hot weather.

The climate conforms closely with that prevalent in most parts of the Central Deccan. There is a hot season lasting from the middle of February to the beginning of June with temperatures up to  $115^{\circ}$  F. in the plains and about  $104^{\circ}$  F. in the higher hills, the monsoon, that lasts till the end of September and accounts for an average rainfall of 40 inches and a dry and cool season extending from October to February when the nights and mornings are often chilly. The district has a bad reputation for malaria, and particularly Unnur is considered one of the death-traps of Hyderabad.

The flora of the district is in many ways similar to the type of Deccan flora which I described at some length in the first volume of this series<sup>1</sup> and while distinct local features are noted by the botanist and forester to the anthropologist.

Adilabad, as in the Nallamallai hills the forest is almost entirely deciduous, and represents in the early months of the hot weather a scene of barrenness and desolation. Evergreen trees are found only on the banks of streams, and near village sites where mango and banyan trees have been planted. Among the more frequent trees useful as timber are *Tectona grandis*, *Tomentosa terminata*, *Hardwickia binata*, *Anogeissus latifolia*, *Pterocarpus Marsupium*, *Boswellia serrata*, *Chloroxylon Swietenia*, and *Dalbergia latifolia*. *Bassia latifolia* provides the Gond with the cherished mahua flowers, and *Buchanania latifolia* with chironji, both of which are foodstuffs of great value to all aborigines. Other wild growing fruit trees are *Eugenia jambolana*, *Feronia elephantum*, *Aegle marmelos*, *Grewia tiliaefolia* and *Diospyros melanoxylon*. *Phoenix sylvestris* and *Borassus flabellifer*, the two palm trees that yield wine (shendi and toddy respectively) are to be found in topes in few areas, but occur rarely in the hills. *Corypha urens*, whose palm wine is used by the Gonds, is unknown in the hill tracts and is extinct.

Despite recent large scale depredations by sportsmen and poachers the sparsely populated forest tracts still contain a certain amount of game and animals as the tiger, leopard, jackal, and various species of deer, and also the wild dog, and the jackal.

<sup>1</sup> The flora of the Deccan London 1943 pp. 11-14

2. During the time I stayed in Madhara an average of ten to twelve cows and bullocks were killed by tigers every year. The tigers attacked their victims quite close to the village in broad daylight.



A horizontal scale bar with markings at 0, 4, 8, and 12 miles. The bar is divided into four equal segments by vertical tick marks. The numbers 0, 4, 8, and 12 are placed above the tick marks, and the word "MILES" is at the right end.

33 K1

PRANHITA-R

danibg

Apparatus

EDDA VAGU

**BHAISA**

SIDONA-R

Varsa

CHINNUR

alli

## REFERENCE

DISTRICT HEAD QUARTER.			
TALUKA ...	...	DO	
DISTRICT BOUNDARY			---
TALUKA ...	DO	...	---
RIVER ...	...	...	
RAILWAY	...	...	
ROAD...	...	...	
HILL ...	...	...	
VILLAGE	...	...	

on the villagers' goats, sheep and dogs, and the innumerable jackals on his poultry. Bears are occasionally a danger to travellers in the jungle, but as a rule they give very little trouble. Though sambar, blue-bull, spotted deer and antelope are numerous, they are nowadays little hunted by Gonds, who seem to have largely abandoned hunting as a sport or a ritual activity. Wild pigs are so plentiful that they are a serious danger to certain crops, and those Gonds in the hills who have tried growing ground-nut have had to give it up because pigs destroyed the whole crop. Among the smaller animals occasionally trapped or chased in the fields are porcupine, hare and monkeys, both of the red and the grey, black-faced varieties.

Most of these wild animals occur only in the hills, whereas the plains with their long stretches of intensively cultivated and densely populated land are almost devoid of forest and consequently of game. These parts are indeed as civilized as any other rather remote rural area of Hyderabad, and the environment of the Plains Gonds has in recent generations changed so much that many of these aboriginals have already lost their familiarity with the forest and have grown to dread the 'wild hills' hardly less than their Maratha and Telugu neighbours.

The administrative units of the district do not coincide with its natural division into riverain tracts, plains and highlands, but since throughout the book and particularly in our review of modern developments we will constantly have to refer to the existing taluqs, it is perhaps as well to describe them here in brief outline.

Adilabad District with its total area of 7,403 square miles is divided into ten taluqs, administrative units with a Tahsildar as the principal representative of Government. Nearly all the taluqs have part both in plains as well as in hill tracts and contain both aboriginal and non-aboriginal populations.

The taluq longest associated with the Nizam's Dominions is Nirmal in the extreme south-west of the district; for even before the treaty of Deogaon in 1803 Nirmal lay outside that part of Berar controlled by the Bhonsle Rajas and was administered directly by the Nizam's officers. At present the taluq comprises a strip some ten miles broad of level densely populated country on the north bank of the Godavari and the wooded hills which, rising to the central highlands, enclose valleys with scattered settlements. The town of Nirmal lies at the foot of the hills and its many fortifications tell of a time when it was a political and military centre of some importance. The road running north up a ghat of some 500 feet and then on towards Adilabad follows the old highways which connected Nirmal with Mahur and Berar on the one side and with Chanda on the other. Gonds are not numerous in the taluq

and on two occasions even killed bullocks in yoke, before the eyes of their owners. Two years previously several hundred people were killed by man-eating tigers, in the highlands of Utur and Asifabad Taluqs alone and I know of Gonds who at that time lost two or three members of their family.

and live mainly in a few hill villages on the borders of Both and the Paigah estate of Yelgudap, which is said to have been one of Shali Jahan's hunting estates.

The taluq of Both, which adjoins Nirmal to the north, is an undulating highland of some 1,400 to 1,500 feet elevation, higher hill-ranges enclose the wide open valley in which the taluq headquarters is situated, but towards the east and north-east of the taluq rolling hills shelter many secluded villages. To-day fairly well opened up by two roads and numerous cart tracks it still contains some very remote corners. Close to the border of Nander District are the magnificent Sasarakunda Falls, where the Penganga drops into a broad rocky canyon (Fig. 1). Gonds who were once the main population live mainly in the foothills and the higher valleys comparatively difficult of access. While the southern and eastern part is dominated by settlers from Telingana, Marathi speaking populations have established themselves in the tract along the Penganga. At Vaddurpet and at Karathwada there are remnants of old forts popularly associated with Gond chiefs, but otherwise the taluq contains no historical remains which might suggest that in past ages it was ever anything but a wooded hill tract sparsely populated by tribal folk.

A range of hills, rising to 2,000 feet, extends from Both over the taluq borders into Kinwat Taluq where curving westwards it forms the spine of the long arm of Kinwat that projects into Berar. Wedged between this range and the Penganga River lies a plain some ten miles long and five miles wide, and here amidst rich cultivated land stands the small town of Kinwat. From Kinwat the Penganga flows westwards, then southwards,

and flow  
the north

the north

Gonds,  
few and

most corner of the In the western-  
posite the Pusad Taluq of Berar, lies the town of Mahur with its im-  
posing hill fort (Fig. 2) and, on the crest of a nearby ridge, the famous  
Gosain monastery of Sirkar, both old centres of Gond life.  
while the Gond population has shrunk to a few and

shrunk to

camp

and Kolams as a place of

The north-east of Kinwat is flat country. There are numerous  
ruins of old Gond forts, but to-day Maratha culture vies with  
colonies of Telugu settlers, while the aborigines live precariously wedged



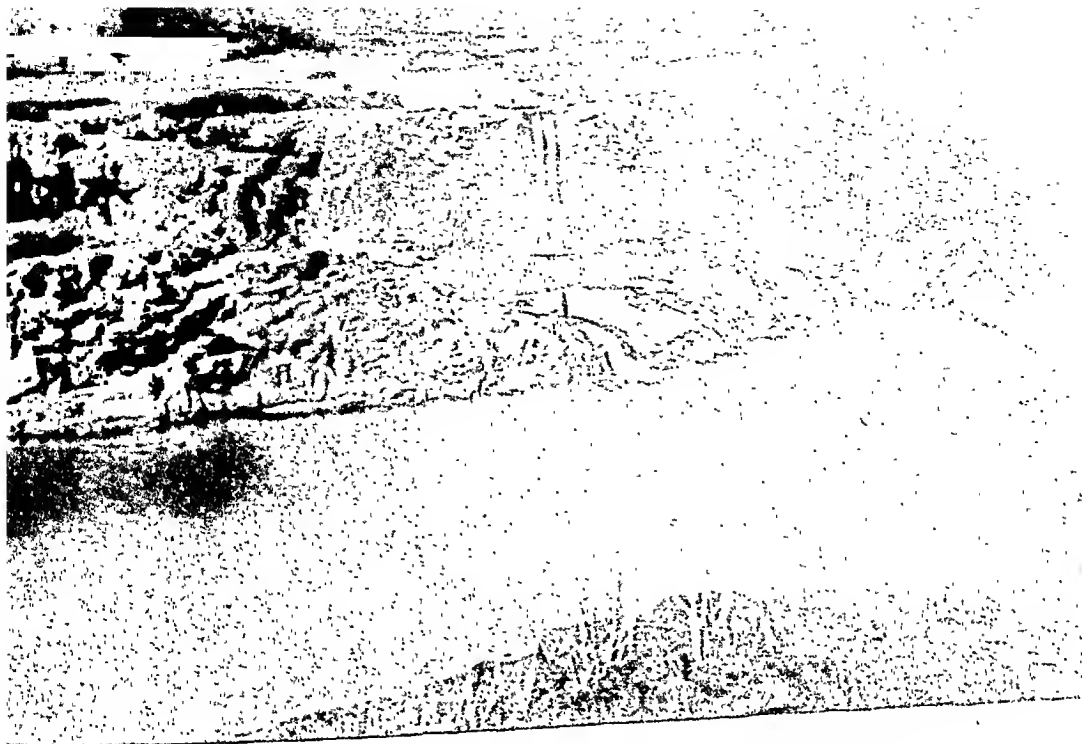


FIG. 1. The Sasarakunda Falls of the Penganga River.

FIG. 2. The Fort of Mahur.





FIG 3 The ruined Fort of Maukgarh.

FIG 4 View from Maukgarh fort



ed in between the exponents of the two rival civilizations.

Immediately east of Kinwat and separated by no natural boundary lies the Adilabad Taluq, with the town of Adilabad, the administrative centre of the district. Adilabad has part both in the wide plain lining the Penganga and in the central highlands. This plain is at its widest just north and east of Adilabad town, where fourteen to fifteen miles of flat country stretch between the foothills and the river. Except for a strip immediately below the hills, it is a forestless tract and the villages, some of them large and prosperous, lie at distances of two or three miles from each other. The population of many is entirely non-aboriginal, but in others Gonds live side by side with Marathas or Telugus, and only in a few are they the sole inhabitants. As you approach the hills the aboriginal element in the population increases and in some of the low valleys Gonds are still in the majority. Towards the east the riverain plain narrows to a width of four to five miles, and here it is less intensively cultivated and forest alternates with stretches of tillage.

The hills rising steeply from lowlands of 800 and 900 feet elevation to over 2,000 feet, are intersected by narrow ravines, filled with dense forest and bamboo-growth, and cart-tracks often wind through the stony beds of streams that dry up during the hot season, but turn to rushing torrents in the rains. It is through such ravines that the traveller has to work his way up into the higher hills where Gond and Kolam villages lie in the widening valleys or on the crown of the plateau.

Through this tangle of wooded hills, where communications are still dependent on the weather and in the rains you may be marooned in a village for quite a number of days, runs the boundary between Adilabad and Utnur, the taluq in the centre of the highlands, the only purely upland taluq in the district. The usual approach to Utnur, the taluq headquarters, is along a road branching off from the Nirmal-Adilabad road at Gudi Hatnur and running for twenty-two miles in a southeasterly direction. The undulating hills, where forest gives way to cultivated land was until half a century ago Gond country, but in the last decades Maratha and Lambara settlers have filtered into the taluq along this thoroughfare.

Utnur, though the taluq headquarters, is little more than a large village, and is situated between three tanks, which permit of rice-cultivation on a small scale. Close by there are the ruins of a fort believed to have belonged to a Gond chief,<sup>1</sup> but scarcely a mile away the forest begins. Extensive forests are indeed the main features of Utnur Taluq, particularly in the south where the reservation of forest has necessitated the abandonment of many ancient village sites, several of which show traces of old iron workings. From the Utnur plateau, the country slopes south and south-west into the valleys of the Kaddam and Godavari

1. Though the Utnur fort may originally have been constructed by a Gond chief, there is evidence that in Maratha times it was held by a Velma.

rivers while to the north east and south east it is ringed by a horse shoe of hills rising in places to over 2 000 feet

Cart tracks lead up the *ghat* on to the highlands where broad valleys are set between rounded sandstone hills covered in forest. This high land in the east of Utnur Taluq where the average village lies at some 1 800 feet above the sea is to-day one of the main preserves of the aborigines and here Gonds and Kolams still remain the predominant population. To the south it falls in a thousand feet drop into the Godavari valley and to the north a *ghat* only slightly less steep gives into the valley of the Pedda Vagu (Fig 5)

To the east the hills continue into the neighbouring Asifabad Taluq not however as a compact highland but split in two by the deep gorge of the Moar River. A narrow, densely wooded range stretches eastwards between the Moar River and the Pedda Vagu till close to Asif

abad here a large trapezoid a range some 2 000 feet high which runs in a south easterly direction at a distance of only five to seven miles from the Godavari. The whole highland is tilted north eastwards the streams draining it flow into the Moar River close to Asifabad and a little further downstream their united waters join the Pedda Vagu

The taluq headquarters Asifabad formerly known as Jangaon lies thus in a fertile plain well watered by two perennial rivers a plain which flanks the Pedda Vagu as it flows towards the Mancherial Balharshah railway and across it into the taluq of Sirpur. Following the railway line south we come to Tandur and the important coal mining centre of Bellampalli, both situated just below the eastern slope of the Tilani highland

After crossing the Pedda Vagu the railway runs northwards to Sirpur on the Penganga skirting a block of hills north east of Asifabad and from there on to Rajura, the headquarters of the Rajura Taluq, a motor road now runs from Asifabad across a pass near Wakri straight to Rajura and Balharshah. Rajura Taluq combines the features of Adilabad on the one side and Utnur and Asifabad on the other in the north is the densely populated Penganga plain while to the south rises a tangle of hills inhabited almost exclusively by Gonds and Kolams. This hill tract takes its name from the famous fortress of Manikgarh commandingly built on a spur which overlooks the Penganga and the intervening plain. Whereas Telugu influence is predominant in Asifabad Rajura falls into the sphere of Maratha culture and many of the plains-villages contain large Kunbi communities from Marathwara.

Sirpur Chinnur and Lakshetpet the three taluqs in the east and south-east of the district do not figure to any great extent in this volume which is mainly concerned with the compact Gond population in the

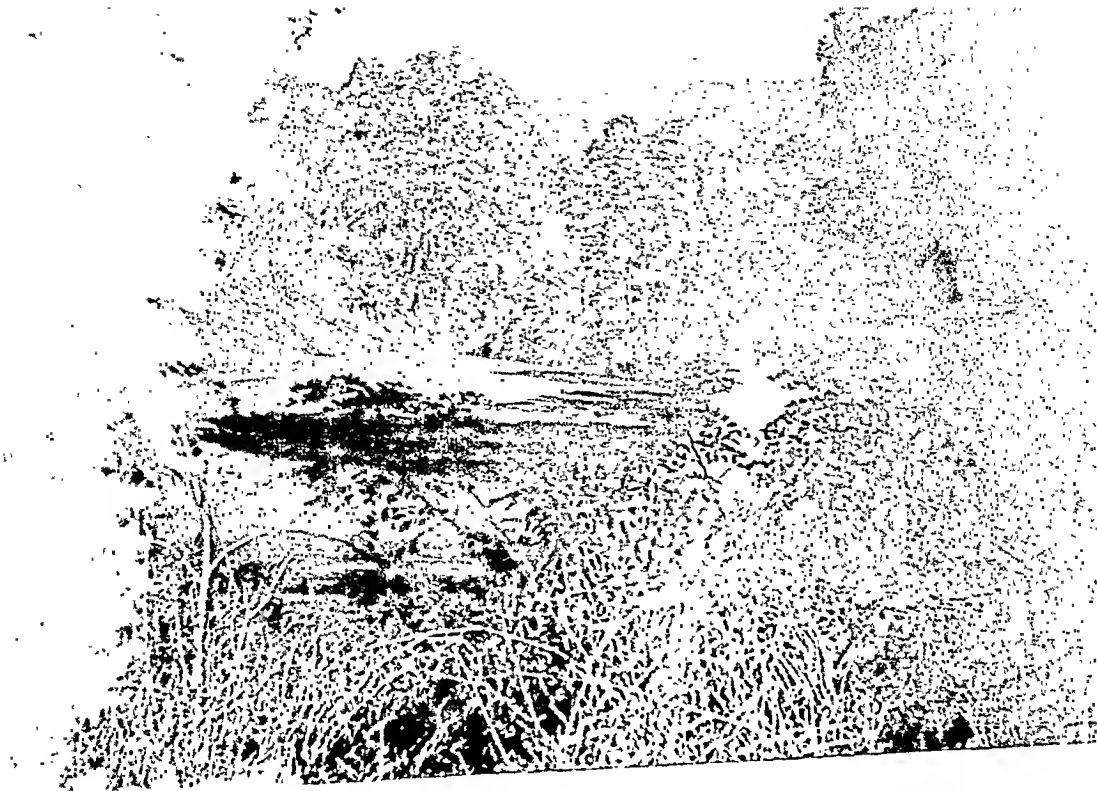


FIG. 5. The Valley of the Pedda Vagu.

FIG. 6. Carts fording the Pedda Vagu in the cold season.



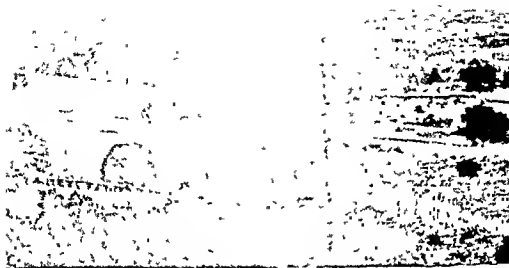


FIG. 7 The village of Pangri in the uplands of Utaur

FIG. 8 The village and fields of Islampur (Mouza) in the Kawal Forest.



central highlands. Sirpur lies between the railway and the Pranhita, the east of the taluq bordering on the estate of the important Gond Zamindar of Ahiri. Its low, wooded hills are sparsely populated by Gonds and teluguized Kolams, but the riverain tracts are occupied by non-aboriginal settlers. Chinnur Taluq, adjoining to the south and bounded by the Pranhita and the Godavari is a tract of open plains and belongs culturally almost entirely to Telingana. Most of the 7,990 Koyas enumerated in Adilabad District are found in this taluq, but Raj Gonds are very few in number. Lakshetipet, bordering on Chinnur in the west, extends between the Godavari and the hill ranges of the central highlands and is thus a riverain tract, orientated like Chinnur towards the Telugu south.

The main lines of modern communications in the Adilabad District form three sides of a square, the fourth of which has yet to be completed. In the south the motor road with a bus service runs along the valley of the Godavari between Nirmal and Mancherial, linked up with the general road-system of Hyderabad by the great Godavari bridge near Dudgaon, eight miles south of Nirmal; northwards run the Nirmal-Adilabad and the Mancherial-Rajura roads, but although these approach the frontiers of the state, they do not fuse with the roads of the Central Provinces. There is no road bridge over the Penganga, nor can you motor across the Godavari at Mancherial. A direct route Adilabad-Asifabad is planned but at present the only motorable connection between Adilabad and Asifabad or Adilabad and Rajura, is the two hundred miles route *via* Nirmal and Mancherial. Besides these main roads, several branch roads have recently further opened up the district: from Mancherial to near the confluence of Godavari and Pranhita, from Nirmal westwards into Nander District, a short stretch to Both and a road now under construction which will branch off the Nirmal-Adilabad Road at Gudi Hatnur for Utnur. But there is no metallised way between Adilabad and Kinwat nor between Adilabad and Mahur. The railway line Mancherial-Balharshah is of little importance for communications within the district, except that it touches the taluq headquarters of Sirpur which is not accessible by metallised road.

In all the areas not served by these roads, communications are still bad, and rough cart-tracks, often unserviceable during the rains, remain the only approach to the majority of Gond villages. But it is only the settlements of Kolams which perch on hills so precipitous and rugged that foot-paths form their only connection with the outside world. Even the remotest of Gond villages can in fair weather be reached by tracks negotiable by carts with a light load and strong bullocks accustomed to steep climbs. Few parts of Hyderabad are as little known as the highlands of Adilabad District, and I have been to many villages not visited by any District Officer within the memory of the present generation. It is a beautiful district with lovely and

varied scenery, the friendly, atmosphere of rolling hills and the wild ruggedness of secluded mountain gorges where bison and tiger have their seldom disturbed haunts



## CHAPTER II.

### THE POPULATION PATTERN.

THE land between the Godavari and the Penganga is to-day the home of several populations of distinctive origin, race and language, and only in the hilly and least accessible tracts do the Gonds lend the country its cultural atmosphere. In the plains, on the fringe of the hills, in the broad low valleys such as that of the Pedda Vagu, and wherever roads have opened up the country, the Gonds live in close contact with populations of different cultural heritage, sometimes sharing one village-site and sometimes inhabiting separate hamlets at a little distance. The movements of populations and particularly the influx of new settlers during the last half century responsible for the present kaleidoscopic pattern of populations will be discussed in a later chapter; there it will be shown how the Gond's association with some of his neighbours is of long standing, while with others he has only been thrown together during the last decades. Yet, whatever shape his relations with the members of other communities may have taken, nowhere is the tribal identity of the Gond impaired nor the distinction between him and other castes obscured; contact between the different populations is confined to economic exchange and cultural adjustment; it has not led to any appreciable racial blending. Neither has there been a linguistic unification: not counting Urdu, the language of the administration, four major languages are spoken in a tract less than sixty miles wide, and all four may be represented in a single village. Waves of Maratha and Telugu civilization meet and overlap in the hills of Adilabad, and the remnants of aboriginal culture are surrounded by the resultant cross-currents.

The populations to-day inhabiting the Adilabad District fall naturally into three divisions: the so-called 'aboriginals,' who have been settled on the land since time immemorial and subsist principally on agriculture; the associated castes of bards, musicians and craftsmen, who are economically dependent on the aboriginals and regard agriculture as a secondary occupation; and finally the castes of Telugu and Maratha extraction—cultivators, artisans and traders—the Mussalmans and the Banjara tribes, all of whom have their origin and cultural connections in adjacent districts and have settled among the 'aboriginal' population only during recent generations without being absorbed within the social system that embraces the first two groups.

## THE ABORIGINALS

## Kolams

The population that can best claim the epithet 'aboriginal' is the Kolams or Kolavars. In the southern districts of Berar<sup>1</sup> nearly 30,000 Kolams have been recorded in 1941 and in Hyderabad too where their exact number has not been ascertained,<sup>2</sup> several thousand members of the tribe are found scattered over the greater part of the Adilabad District from the westernmost corner of Kinwat to the taluqs of Sirpur and Lakshetipet in the east and south. Most Kolams speak a distinct tribal tongue but some groups in the west have exchanged this for Marathi while in the east there are many communities of telugu-kolams. In the own language the Kolams call themselves Kola.

of Dravidian languages agreeing in some points with Telugu and in others with Tamil and connected forms of speech.<sup>3</sup> The Kolams spoken in Adilabad is unintelligible to Gonds and judging from my -affinities s, Kolams with either

The difference in physical type between Kolams and Gonds is not sufficiently great to exclude all possibility of error in identification. But as a rule the Kolams are of shorter stature and stockier build, with features coarser than those of the average Gond and a skin of dark brown colour. Their forehead is rather low, the nose broad and fleshy, and the mouth very full sometimes with a slight tendency to prognathism; the chin is generally small pointed and weak. Their hair is black and usually wavy and the growth on limbs and face fairly pronounced. Even in the absence of measurements it may be said that the most primitive racial types occurring in the district are to be found among the Kolams.<sup>4</sup>

1 Information on the Kolams of Berar is contained in the article 'Kolams' in *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India* Vol. III pp. 520-526.

2 In the Hyderabad Census of 1941 only 746 Kolams were recorded but this was due to the erroneous practice of treating them as a Gond sub-tribe and I estimate that there must be at least 8,000 Kolams in the District.

3 According to Grierson "the Kolams must from a philological point of view be considered as the remnant of an old Dravidian tribe who have not been involved in the developments of the principal Dravidian languages, of a tribe who have not originally spoken a Dravidian form of speech." *Linguistic Survey* Vol. IV p. 561.

4 Kolams and particularly the women speak with an almost living singing intonation which curiously enough always reminded me of Hungarians though obviously entirely fortuitous this association struck me whenever I visited a Kolam village.

5 For photographs of Kolams see my Essay 'Tribal Populations of Hyderabad Yesterday and Today' *Census of India 1941* Vol. XXI Figs 8-11.

Until recently the Kolams subsisted on shifting-cultivation and it was only the introduction of forest conservancy during the last decades that forced most of them into a new mode of life. Nevertheless in the central highlands they may still be found felling and burning the jungle on hill-slopes, broad-casting small millets,<sup>1</sup> pulses, and sometimes jawari millet<sup>2</sup> in the ashes and then raking the seeds over with a primitive hoe. Jawari, however, is more often dibbled into holes made either by this same hoe or a longhandled digging-stick. After the seed has been dibbled the soil is brushed over with a kind of broom, a bamboo with one end spliced into many ribs splayed out fan-like. The spiked iron blade of the hoe is attached to a knee-shaped haft by means of a socket; indeed sometimes the same iron point may be affixed alternatively to hoe and digging-stick. Both instruments are used also for digging up wild roots and tubers, which still constitute an important item of the food-supply. Many Kolams are also expert in honey-taking, but hunting is no longer of any economic importance. None of the Kolams hunt with bow and arrow, but I saw pellet-bows among the Kolams of Kinwat, and roughly made bows are still used in pantomimic performances.

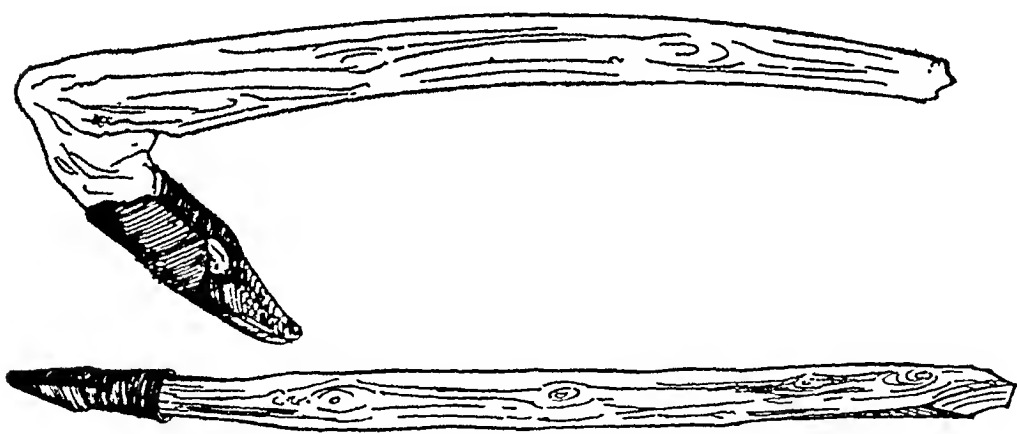


FIG. I. *Kolam hoe and digging-stick.*

Hill fields are seldom cultivated for more than two or three years in succession, and wherever he is free to do so the Kolam does not hesitate to move to another place, as soon as the slopes round his village show signs of exhaustion. The rules that once determined the exact tract where each group was entitled to cultivate are to-day no longer discernible. For all but a few Kolams have had to relinquish their ancestral jungles and the new order has invalidated all hereditary rights. There is good reason to believe however, that the joint ownership of the land was vested in the local groups, each consisting of a number of

1. *Panicum miliare* and *Panicum italicum*,

2. *Sorghum vulgare*.

families closely related by blood and marriage and that no permanent individual proprietary rights in hill fields was recognized. Even the Kolams of to day who are familiar with the idea of individual rights on land do not consider the hill-sides cultivated with hoe and digging-stick as the property of individuals.

Nowadays many Kolams have of necessity taken to ploughing and the cultivation of permanent fields either as independent peasants or as hirelings of men of other castes. While in their old economy domestic animals except chickens and perhaps pigs had no place, some Kolams now keep cattle and occasionally goats and like the Gonds they have no prejudice against eating beef.

No better gauge of the Kolams rapid transition from one style of life to another can be found than the diversity in the types of settlements. There are still some small hamlets of two or three houses, set in the middle of a jungle clearing where a tangle of crops riots amid half-burnt trunks and a few huge trees which have defied axe and fire. But more frequent are orderly settlements of a dozen or more houses perched on a ridge some hundred or two hundred feet above a Gond village which spreads out in the valley below. The Kolams seems to favour such elevated sites even though the way to the water may be long and steep. In these days however many Kolam settlements are situated amidst flat fields on sites where two or three groups from the surrounding hills have collected. Here as in the hills rectangular houses with stake walls and low grass roofs are arranged on three sides of an open square. In its centre there is invariably a large water worn boulder sacred to Polakama the Village Mother and nearby lie five smaller stones, the hearth on which sacrificial food is cooked. Most Kolam settlements are extremely clean and well kept and even in the plains they often compare favourably with the more substantial villages of Gonds.

The material possessions of the Kolam are few. A hoe, a digging stick, a hatchet, one or two knives and sickles are all he requires for the raising of hill crops, the collection of jungle produce and the making of baskets. He dresses in a narrow *langoti*, drawn between the legs and tucked into his belt in front and behind, while his wife wears a *sari* and a few cheap ornaments. With such scanty belongings the Kolam is mobile and when life becomes

any of Kolams subsists solely on hoe cultivation and all those who have taken to ploughing must acquire ploughs, harrows and yokes and—most precious of possessions for the newly fledged peasant—bullocks to draw the plough and to thresh the grain. Some men have now their own plough cattle, and others hire bullocks against an annual rental of grain or a share of their crops from merchants or wealthy cultivators of other castes. The more settled mode of



FIG. 9. The interior of the Ayak shrine at Pangri Madura.

FIG. 10. A Kolam house in Boramgutta.





FIG 12 K. olam  
dibbling mullet with  
a digging stick.



life, the closer contact with Gonds and lowlanders, and in good years the ample yield of plough-land create both the wish and the possibility of supplementing the meagre household goods, and one finds now Kolams who dress like Gonds in *dhoti* and have title-deeds to their lands, good houses, cattle and even carts. Such comparative wealth is not general; and many a Kolam ekes out a precarious existence by cultivating other people's land with other people's bullocks. Even those who have successfully completed the transition from semi-nomadic jungle-dweller to stable peasant speak with a strange nostalgia of the good old times, when the forest was theirs and they gleaned rich harvests from the virgin ground of their newly cleared hill-fields. Listening to their tales, one would think that they were then truly well off and that the loss of their heritage is scarcely compensated by the rise in their standard of living carrying with it, as it so often does, the burden of debts and obligations.

The model on which the Kolams shaped their new economy, when the tightening of forest laws forced them out of their traditional style of life, was primarily the peasant economy of the Gonds, a population of plough cultivators already familiar to them through manifold contacts of long standing. But it is not only in agricultural methods and material possessions that Gond influence is discernible. The adoption of certain customs and ceremonies seems to have long preceded economic assimilation, and in some aspects of their social life it is difficult to discern under the veneer of Gond influence the traits peculiar to Kolam culture.

The Kolams, like the Gonds, are organized in exogamous clans, and most of these have names identical with those of certain Gond clans. These clans are grouped in phratries corresponding to the Gond system of seven-brother clans, six-brother clans, five-brother clans and four-brother clans. But among the Kolams these groupings are devoid of any mythological sanction, and it is almost certain that they have been formed by the co-ordination of existing exogamous units with the Gond clan-system, just as in Berar and parts of Kinwat the Kolams have adopted Marathi sept-names and the teluguized Kolams have house-names (*inti perulu*) like their Telugu neighbours.

In most villages members of two or more clans are found, and the clan with the oldest associations with the land furnishes the priest or *delak*, who acts also in secular matters as leader and spokesman of the small group.

Just as marriages are regulated by a clan-system obviously modelled on Gond lines, so the wedding ceremonial is but a close though simplified imitation of Gond marriage-rites, and relics of old Kolam ritual exist, if at all, only in minor deviations from that pattern.

The funeral customs of the Kolams, on the other hand, are quite distinct from Gond usage. The dead are buried in the forest far from

habitation and field and the grave is never again visited. Yet burial is only the disposal of the body, and the soul of the deceased often receives further attention. Those who can afford the expense of the accompanying sacrifice erect in his name a wooden post (*munda*) in front of the shrine of Ayak that forms the cult centre of their territorial group and this *munda* is held to symbolize the deceased. Whenever a new *munda* is put up the blood of the sacrificial animal is sprinkled over all the posts in the row and also over the small stone-slabs which in former days were erected in the place of the wooden *munda*. Here at the times of festivals and at agricultural rites the deceased receive their share of the prayers and offerings.

The Kolams are renowned for their skill in divination and the propitiation of local deities. This reputation so similar to that which the Baigas enjoy among the Gonds of the Maikal Hills, has led many Gond communities to entrust the cult of certain local deities and particularly of the gods holding sway over forests and hills, to the priests of nearby Kolam villages and the name Pujari by which the Kolams are known to the Gonds refers evidently to their traditional function as priests of the local gods. But it is only where Kolams live still on their ancestral land that they are called upon to conduct the rites of the village deities and even then only the individual Kolam priest acts as *detari* at the Gond rites while both communities celebrate their annual feasts and ceremonies independently.

The principal deity of all Kolams is Ayak. When speaking any language other than their own they refer to this deity as Bhumana or Bhumi Deo and it is admitted by both tribes that he is identical with the Bhumana Pen worshipped by many Gonds. It seems that in the old times each territorial group had its own sanctuary and shrine for Ayak where the memorials for its dead were erected and all members assembled on feast days. Even to-day these sanctuaries still serve as the main cult-centres and though dispersed the members of the old groups make every effort to attend occasionally the annual rites in honour of the Ayak of their ancestral clan land. Apart from the ancient shrines at the group-centre which may not be moved there are outside most Kolam villages one or more small shrines containing the symbols of Ayak—a carved wooden stave usually crowned with a bunch of peacock feathers. Though Kolams are emphatic that there exists only one Ayak, the supreme deity the Ayaks of the individual groups are to all practical purposes regarded as separate deities. Besides Ayak they worship Polakama the Village Mother, who corresponds to Anwal of the Gonds, it is mainly to her that the Kolam turns in times of sickness with the promise of a sacrifice. Gaburaki the god who protects the village against dangers and the visitations of evil spirits is almost identical with the Aki Pen of the Gonds. No shrine, stone or post is sacred to Bhumi Devi the earth goddess, but before the



Kolams begin sowing, they sacrifice to her a pig or a chicken.

Despite the difference in language and generally also in economic status, Kolams and Gonds consider themselves related communities. Kolams eat freely in the houses of Gonds, and many Gonds partake without hesitation of the food of Kolams. Others adopt a stricter view and emphasize that they are of superior caste and therefore debarred from sharing the food of Kolams. Cases of inter-marriage between Gonds and Kolams are rare, and are considered irregular by both tribes. But the offspring of such unions experience no great difficulty in being accepted into the one or the other community. Indeed Gond tradition tells that at least one particular Kolam clan owes its origin to the chance encounter of a legendary Gond raja with a Kolam maid.

It is however only the Kolami-speaking Kolams who enjoy a status in tribal society hardly inferior to that of the Gonds. Those outlying groups who have fallen under the sway of either Maratha or Telugu culture and lost with their language many of their old customs occupy a very different position; they are in the process of becoming a Hindu caste, and between them and the Gonds there is no feeling of a common tribal tradition.

### *Naikpods.*

Resembling the Kolams in many respects and often confused with them by outsiders are the Naikpods, to whom the Gonds refer as Mache. The same wooded hills and secluded valleys where here and there Kolams still pursue their old mode of life serve also some groups of Naikpods as a refuge area, and there they practise shifting-cultivation with hoe and digging-stick in much the same fashion as Kolams. In such places members of both tribes have formed common settlements, but despite the similarity of their economy, they never constitute a united community. For the Naikpods not only consider themselves socially superior, but they also speak a different language. In the taluqs of Asifabad, Rajura and Utnur, where Kolams and Naikpods live in close contact, the latter speak, without exception, Telugu; but in the western parts of Both and Kinwat and in the neighbouring Pusad Taluq of Berar, there are Naikpods who speak their own tribal language. The existence of this language mentioned by Hislop as 'Naikudi Gondi' seems to have been forgotten and is not referred to in any Census report. But during a tour in March 1943 I met with it among the Naikpods of Both Taluq and from the limited material which I could then collect as well as Hislop's vocabulary it seems that it has close affinities with Kolami; it contains, however, a number of words which do not occur, in either Kolami, Gondi or Telugu. Both the Naikpods and Kolams of that area say that they cannot properly understand each other's languages,

but that now and then they catch the meaning of a sentence or two  
 forest and  
 their own  
 .. materially  
 more advanced and have without exception taken to the plough.  
 Though in their own language they call themselves Kolavar—the same  
 name by which the Kolams refer to themselves in Kolamu —, they dis-  
 claim emphatically any connection with Kolams.

It is only an insignificant number of Naikpods who live in hill-  
 villages and are in close touch with Kolams. Most of the Telugu speak-  
 ing Naikpods are found in villages of the plains, where they usually  
 work as tenants or agricultural labourers, and only seldom as independent  
 cultivators. Naikpods are not confined to the Adilabad District, but  
 are also found in Karimnagar and Warangal, where a few still cut  
*podu* and practise shifting-cultivation. Even where they live in prox-  
 imity to Gonds there is none of the feeling of relationship or ancient  
 association that prevails between Kolams and Gonds. The clans of  
 the Naikpods are exogamous but they are not grouped into larger units  
 comparable to the seven,- six,- five and four-brother phratries of the  
 Gonds. In the hills of Rajura Taluq there is a small group of Naikpods

The Naikpods and Kolams is expressed that of Gonds  
 and pork, and  
 the poorest Naikpod angle fruits and  
 roots and a little grain raised by use and digging-stick refuses to eat  
 in the house of a Gond raja.

The religion of both groups of Naikpods

the name of the dead. They do not erect *munda* in

The Naikpods are distinguished from the Kolams not only in speech  
 and social organization, but also in physical appearance. While the  
 Kolam is of stocky build and coarse features

among the lower Telugu castes with whom they share a very

Fig. 13. Kodapa  
Sonu of Marlavai.  
(left)



Fig. 14. Mesram  
Chitru of Keslapur.  
(right)

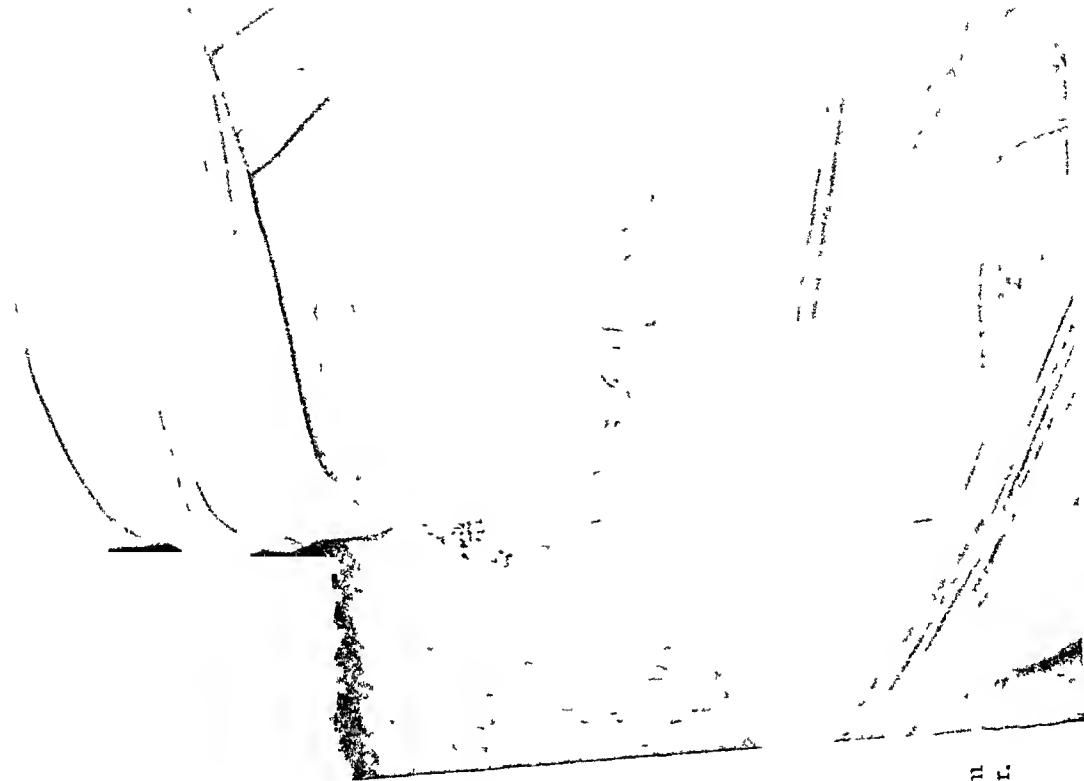


Fig. 15  
Moth of Bar

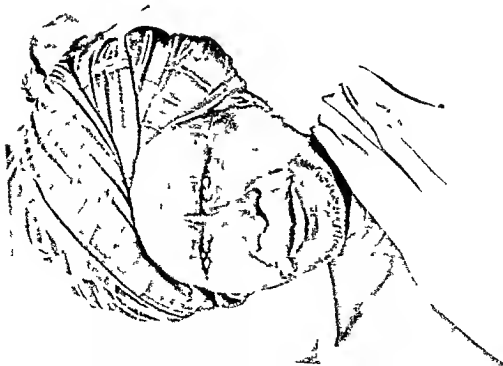


Fig. 16 Karsenga  
Moth of Marlaya



dark colour of skin. Among the western Naikpods, on the other hand, faces are broader and coarser, but on the whole they too are less primitive than the average Kolam of Adilabad.

### *Gonds.*

Whereas Kolams and Naikpods are scattered over the Adilabad District in small groups, it is the Gonds who constitute the great mass of the aboriginals and occupy comparatively large tracts as a compact population. In 1941 71,874<sup>1</sup> Gonds were counted in Adilabad; until a few generations ago they were the predominant race throughout the length and breadth of the district, and the ruined forts of Gond rajas testify still to their former political power. But at the present time only the highlands remain Gond country, whereas the surrounding plains *and even the broader valleys are largely populated by settlers of Maratha and Telugu stock.* In the midst of these materially more advanced and economically aggressive populations, Gonds form here and there enclaves of aboriginal culture, living in hamlets at some distance from the larger villages of Hindu and Muslim folk. But in other places they have abandoned all attempts at retaining a measure of separateness, and dwell house to house with other castes often economically dependent on Hindu or Muslim land-owners.

Despite frequent contact with outsiders nearly all Raj Gonds of Adilabad speak Gondi amongst themselves. While in Warangal District there are many Koyas who speak no other tongue but Telugu there is only one small group of Raj Gonds within the borders of Hyderabad who do not speak Gondi in their own houses. The local bazaar-language, Telugu in the south and east and Marathi in the north and west, is spoken by many men, and in most villages one finds some who are fluent in Urdu. Most women, on the other hand, and quite a number of men, know no other tongue but Gondi.

What is the physical appearance of the Gonds of Adilabad? Even those familiar with the tribe for years and seldom at a loss to recognize a Gond in a bazaar crowd will find it hard to give a concise answer to this question. There is no one racial type to which the majority of Gonds could be said to conform, but nearly all have an indefinable common element in their bearing. Within a single village you may find five men differing widely in stature, colour of skin and facial features, yet all are Gonds and by no means exceptional in bodily make-up. Such physical diversity in a tribe of homogeneous language and culture calls for explanation, and I am inclined to believe that it may be due to the fusion of populations of different racial stock which occurred in the far distant past. Though the possibility of occasional sex-rela-

1. The increase since 1931 when 57,244 Gonds were recorded is probably mainly due to the vagaries of the Census enumerations, but a growth of population comparable to the general increase in H.E.H. the Nizam's Dominions is by no means improbable.

tions between Gond women and men of other castes cannot be excluded in a country where several communities live often side by side, I do not believe that any considerable miscegenation occurs in present times. Gond custom is in this respect very strict and sexual intercourse with any outsider other than Kolams is considered a serious offence. I have met a few Gonds who obviously have foreign blood in their veins, but the very fact that they stand out from the rest of the villagers speaks for the comparative rarity of such recent interbreeding.

A prevalent type and since it does not occur among other communities in Adilabad perhaps the nearest approach to what may have to be considered the Gond type is characterized by a broad and rather flat face, high cheek bones, a small, short nose which widens rapidly from a narrow depressed ridge, a weak and not very full mouth, and a small pointed chin. Faces of this type with their broad cheek-bones and the weak lower jaw may be described as heart shaped, though in the plumpness of youth they often appear round and tend to give even adults a certain childlike look. I would say that medium stature and a rather slender build are frequently associated with this type, but in the absence of measurements and statistics all such apparent connections are likely to be fallacious.

Another common type is the more robust Gond of heavier build with a longer face and more prominent features, a large straight nose, full lips and a moderately strong chin. The cheek bones are here less pronounced but on the whole the face gives an impression of greater energy.

Less frequent than either of these and to some extent reminiscent of Kolams is the type with a face of extremely coarse modelling, low receding forehead, eyes in shallow sockets, a flat massive nose, broad even at the ridge, which is very depressed at the root, and ending in wide nostril, a large mouth with fleshy, slightly upturned lips, which are seldom closed even in repose, and a weak chin.

But		delicately
shaped		aquiline
nose, and		dark skin
often seen	as go with this type, which comes nearest to the type prevalent among the lower strata of the local Telugu population	

Not all Gonds conform to one or the other of these types which must be regarded rather as border-marks enclosing an immense variety of shades and features than as set *chiches*. Even looking through the illustrations of this volume the reader will find that few of them meet the description of these types in every detail. But Figures 13 and 15 give a fair idea of the first type, while the man in Figure 14 is an example for the longer faced type. The rather coarse and primitive type is depicted in Figure 17 and the man in Figure 19 is of progressive features and comes incidentally from a family which



Fig. 1. The  
Manku of the  
metta



Fig. 10. Aral Arju  
of Marlavai.





resided long in the Godavari valley close to Telugu populations.

Among women there exist corresponding types. There are the very softly modelled features of the round-faced type, well represented by the young girl in Fig. 22, and the more prominent features of such women as shown in Figures 25 and 26.

The stature of Gonds is medium. In general they must be considered well-built, and some young men have very fine bodies. Stoutness is rare, and though some elderly men put on weight, it is more usual for men to shrink with the years and in old age to become thin and bony. Many young girls have well modelled figures that would be considered beautiful in any society. Their arms, legs and thighs are slender and the hips not too broad. With hard work, child-bearing and passing years they lose their earlier gracefulness, but even middle-aged women often retain their slimness of figure, and tend rather to haggardness than to obesity. Very full breasts are comparatively rare. Some girls of the stockier type, however, are plump in youth and turn soon into matrons whom even the most charitable observer could not describe as attractive.

The colour of skin ranges in both men and women from a dark gold tone over full copper-brown to black-brown, but a lighter rather than a darker complexion is on the whole more frequent. The hair of practically all adult Gonds is black, but among young children a brownish tint may be found. It is straight or wavy, but the quality of hair can only be observed in women and young boys, for all men shave their heads except for a small top-tuft. Facial hair-growth is moderate, but only old men wear straggly beards, and even moustaches are rare among the young.

The dress and ornaments worn by the Gonds do not essentially differ from those of the other cultivating castes, of the district and include hardly a single item made by the Gonds themselves. The men wear a *dhoti* of white cotton cloth, usually girded above the knees and a white or coloured turban. In the last twenty years shirts have become increasingly popular, and so general has their use become that they can be said to form part of the tribal dress. However, when working and in hot weather most men wisely discard them. Coats of western and sometimes also Persian cut are worn by those who can afford such luxury, but generally only on ceremonial occasions and on visits to bazaars or other villages. Girls and women wear a small loin-cloth under the *sari* which is tied firmly round the hips; one end is drawn between the legs and tucked in at the back while the other is thrown over the right shoulder, its folds covering the stomach and breasts. Shoulders and the greater part of the back, as well as the arms are often adorned with an elaborate tattoo. Bodices or *choli* such as are in general use among the rural population are seldom seen on Gond women; they wear a *choli* only when dressing up for the Dandari-danc-

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7                      8                      9                      10                      11                      12                      13                      14                      15                      16                      17                      18                      19                      20                      21                      22                      23                      24                      25                      26                      27                      28                      29                      30                      31                      32                      33                      34                      35                      36                      37                      38                      39                      40                      41                      42                      43                      44                      45                      46                      47                      48                      49                      50                      51                      52                      53                      54                      55                      56                      57                      58                      59                      60                      61                      62                      63                      64                      65                      66                      67                      68                      69                      70                      71                      72                      73                      74                      75                      76                      77                      78                      79                      80                      81                      82                      83                      84                      85                      86                      87                      88                      89                      90                      91                      92                      93                      94                      95                      96                      97                      98                      99                      100

uncomfortable garment<sup>1</sup>  
 or ornaments from the same  
 rural populations the orna-  
 ments of both men and women are for the most part distinctive. The  
 women wear heavy embossed silver heart shaped pendants on long  
 chains silver necklets fastened by hook and eye heavy anklets and arm-  
 lets and on feast days they like to dress their newly oiled hair with  
 silver chains, and some wear large shield shaped ear studs. Toe rings  
 and finger rings necklaces and even bracelets are made from coins of  
 various denominations. The most valuable possessions of both men and  
 women are silver belts of small embossed plaque links which are worn  
 above *dhoti* or *sari*. Men have otherwise only a few rings, and an  
 occasional silver armlet or golden ear ring but women wear besides  
 their black beaded marriage necklaces any of the beads and gold and  
 silver ornaments obtainable locally as well as glass bangles of a heavy,  
 coloured variety.

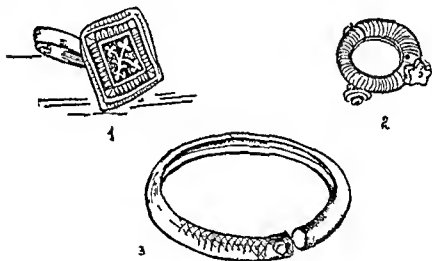


FIG II Women's ornaments 1 Silver rings  
 2 Gold ear ring 3 Silver bracelet

The types of settlements and houses of the Gonds will presently be described in detail. They are in general larger and more substantial than those of either Kolams or Naikpods. For on whatever cultural and economic level the Gonds may have stood in past epochs they have

<sup>1</sup> When I first came to the Gond country I brought with me some cloth of a superior quality and gave them as presents at weddings however hardly any of them were put to the use for which they were intended and later I saw them worn by the brides as well as others as jackets in the rain.

Fig 21. K<sup>a</sup>  
of of the l  
Q 13k



Fig 22. Iachnu  
the grin l-dangl ter  
cf Kanaka Moti  
(Fig 15)



FIG. 23. Gond girl  
of Netnur.



FIG. 24. Bagi, the  
wife of Kanaka  
Boju of Marlavai.



Fig 25. May 11  
 1st of 1st 1st  
 1st 1st 1st



Fig 26. 1st 1st  
 the sister of 1st 1st  
 1st 1st 1st



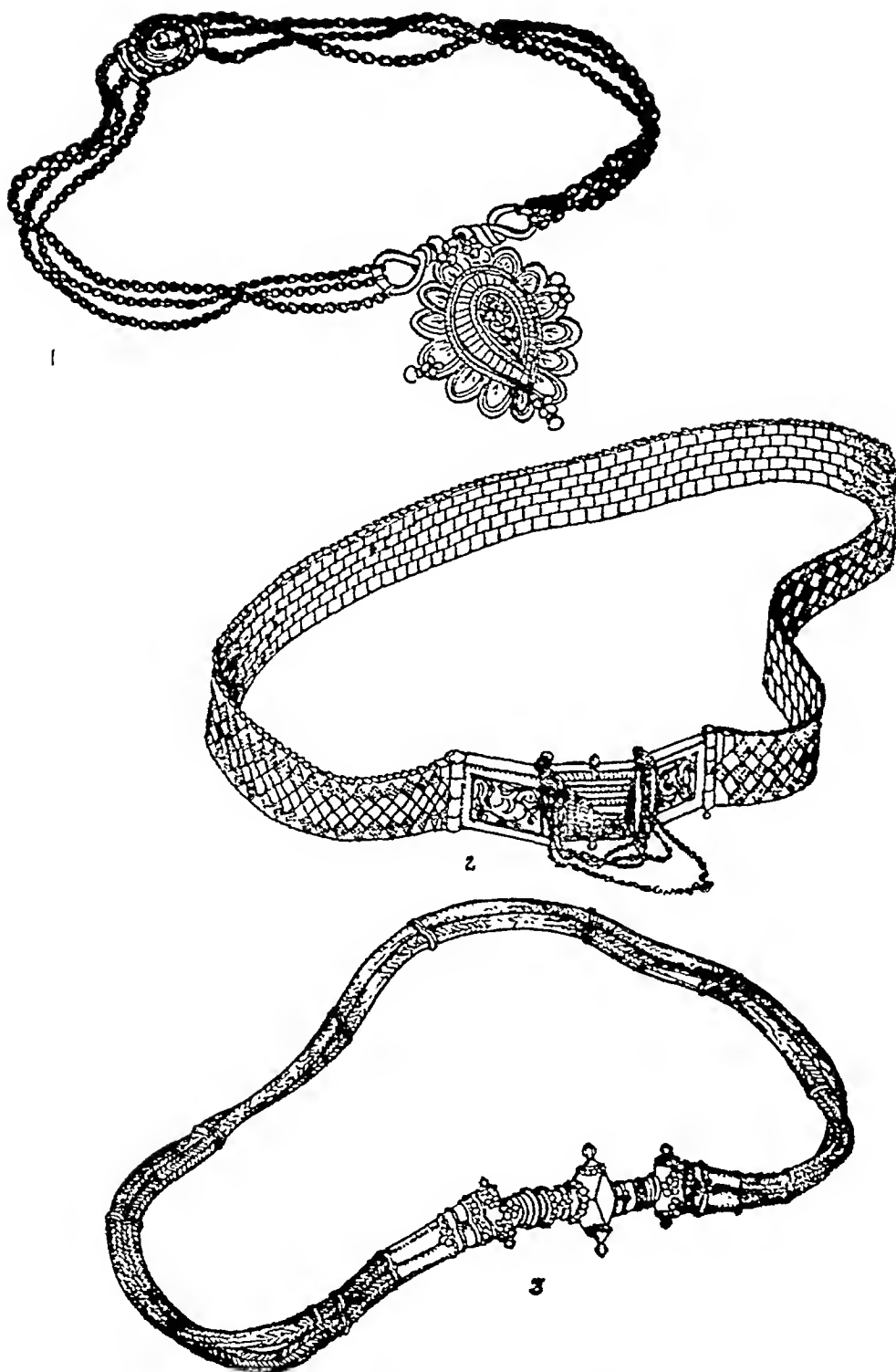


FIG. III. Silver ornaments: 1. Woman's necklace and pendant;  
2. Belt worn by either sex; 3. Man's belt.

for several centuries been peasants with solid homesteads and an economy based on plough cultivation and cattle breeding. As long as no forest-laws restricted the area open to cultivation, they shifted their fields every few years, cultivating the land round their villages in rotation, without, however, changing their dwellings. Thus there exist numerous ancient village sites that have been inhabited for many generations, but individually Gonds are rather unsteady and will move to another village on slight provocation.

The Gonds' social organization will be discussed at length in Book II, but a short review of their essential characteristics will help the reader to see Gond culture as a whole before the individual elements have been described in detail.

Gond society has both its vertical stratification and its horizontal divisions, the latter are, at least to day, of more fundamental importance. The basis of the social structure is a system of four phratries

group. Associated with each phratry are one or more totem animals which may be neither killed nor eaten by phratry-members. In the existing literature on the Gonds of the Central Provinces the clans constituting these phratries are referred to as seven god clans, six-god clans and so on, but I prefer to speak of the seven brother phratry and the six brother phratry. For the word *wen* is better translated by 'divine ancestor,' than by 'god,' and the members of each phratry trace their origin from seven, six, five and four mythical brothers respectively, who are now revered as ancestors. Consequently we will speak of a seven-brother phratry and six brother clans and in a similar way of the other

number of these clans, and no Gond is able even to enumerate all the clans of his own phratry. In travelling from one area to another one meets new clans, not represented in other parts of the country, and the following table of phratries and their respective clans contains consequently only those clans that occur in any strength in the Adilabad District, while clans centred in the neighbouring districts of the Central Provinces, and perhaps represented in Hyderabad by only the one or other recently immigrated family, have been omitted. In the six-brother phratry and the five-brother phratry the clans are grouped into two sub phratries, but only in the former have these groups names of their own. Their origin and significance will be discussed later:

#### SEVEN BROTHER PHRATRY OR YERWEN SAGA

Maravi, Purka, Korvetta, Marskola, Pandera, Verma, Mesram

## SIX-BROTHER PHRATRY OR SARIWEN SAGA:

A. *Pandwen Saga*:

Atram, Geram, Torosam, Kotnaka, Korenga, Aram, Koram, Danam, Dugam, Kachimur, Veladi, Kochera, Wika, Pendur, Katele, Urvetta, Kurmetta, Vade.

B. *Sarpe Saga*:

Tumram, Kodapa, Rai Siram, Vetu, Salam, Marapa, Here Kumra, Mandari.

## FIVE-BROTHER PHRATRY OR SIWEN SAGA:

A. Kumra, Daranja, Alam, Arka Ara, Geram, Kinaka, Surpam.

B. Kursenga, Kanaka, Anaka, Jungnaka, Walkal, Pusnaka, Karpeta, Dhurwa, Soyam, Korcha, Kachal, Chikram, Saratal, Paratsal.

## FOUR-BROTHER PHRATRY OR NALWEN SAGA:

Partsaki, Shermaki, Siram, Naitam, Marpachi, Tsakati, Mangam, Pusam, Talanda, Poyam, Kusram, Keram, Tekam, Kova.

All members of a person's own phratry stand to him or her in the relation of *saga*, i.e., paternal kinsmen, and are excluded from the ranks of potential mates. Sex-relations within the phratry are considered incest and can never be legalized by marriage. Members of other phratries, on the other hand, are *soira* or potential mates and relations-in-law. An apparent irregularity in this system is a closer association between the seven-brother and the five-brother phratries. These two phratries are considered related and it is said that originally all their members regarded each other as *saga* and abstained from intermarrying. The five-brother clans listed A, who claim to be the descendants of Sipiserna Rau and to constitute the "real" five-brother folk, still do not intermarry with seven-brother clans, but among the clans listed under B, who are believed to be descended from Dundria Rau, this rule of exogamy is no longer observed.

Each clan or *pari* worships a clan-god, described as Persa Pen or 'great god,' and in many cases the shrine of this deity still lies within the ancestral clan-land. Though the clans are now widely dispersed, their old homelands are, with exceptions, still known, and a territorial system according to which each clan was centred in one particular area can still be roughly reconstructed. But as the clans increased and scattered, many of them split into sub-clans or *khandan*<sup>1</sup> each of whom erected a separate shrine for the Persa Pen, and the *khandan* is often known by the name of the village which harbours, or of that which originally harboured, the shrine. The cult of the Persa Pen lies in the hand of the clan-priest or *katora*, and if a clan is split into several *khandan* with separate shrines, each of them has a separate *katora*.

1. This is an Urdu word, but is completely acclimatized in Gondi.



Through these horizontal divisions of Gond society runs the vertical structure of an old feudal system. When in the 18th century the collapse of the Gond kingdoms deprived the tribal chieftains of their political power this system entered upon a gradual decline, and to-day the former feudal lords are little more than caste headmen. But the outlines of the system are still clearly discernible. Chieftains who styled themselves *rajas* ruled over territories varying from the size of a taluq to an area containing a few villages. The most important of the raja-families was for a long time the house of Chanda which is of Atram clan and ruled over a considerable territory extending across the Pen-ganga into the present Adilabad District. Kindred families were established in other parts of the same district and the present Gond *rajas* in the taluqs of Utnur and Asifabad are remotely related to the Chanda Raja. Each raja exercised direct control over a stretch of country nearest his residence, but in the outlying territories he delegated his power to *mokashi* who ruled over anything between ten and forty villages. In the days of Mogul and Maratha rule some of these *mokashi* were confirmed as *deshmukh*,<sup>1</sup> and their descendants still bear this title. Moreover there were independent *thakurs* who exercised authority over the same level as the *mokashi* have no administrative functions but they still wield a good deal of moral influence. They preside at important panchayats settle disputes over tribal custom and function at the ceremonies connected with the readmittance of excommunicated persons into the tribe. Though they have usually the tendency to intermarry with houses of similar status these chieftains do not form a class apart from the rest of the tribe and many of them find their wives among the daughters of ordinary folk.

In the village of his residence a raja or *mokashi* acts generally also as *patel*, but in other villages any respected and moderately prosperous man may function as headman and represent the community in dealings with outsiders. Some of these *patel* are recognized by Government but the authority of others springs only from the confidence of the community.

As the clan priest (*katora*) conducts the cult of the clan god so a village priest (*devari*) performs the rites for the village deities. He is usually a descendant of the village founder and often combines his function as priest with that of *patel*. No special supernatural powers are required of a man to act as *devari* for the task of establishing direct contact with the gods lies with the *bhaktal* or seers. These are men or more rarely women who during certain ritual performances fall into a state of trance, interpreted as possession by gods.

<sup>1</sup> In the Maratha kingdoms the *deshmukh* was an officer in charge of a small territorial unit, generally a *pargana* who collected revenue and other taxes.

The cult of the clan deities stands certainly foremost in the Gonds' religious consciousness, except perhaps in those areas where tribal culture is already in a state of disintegration. Other prominent deities are Aki Pen, the Village-Guardian, and Auwal the Village-Mother, whose places of worship are universal features of every Gond village. Shrines of Bhimana, Jangu Bai, Boani, and Rajul Pen, all deities with power to influence the fate of human beings, are found in many villages, but their cult rests in the hands of individual families and is usually not the concern of the whole community. All Gonds, on the other hand, worship the Earth-Mother, Dhartri Mata, and the supreme being, Shembu Pen or Sri Shembu, to whom, when speaking any language other than Gondi, they refer as Mahadeo or Bhagavan.

All deities are thought of in anthropomorphic terms, and their reality is for the average Gond as great as that of his material environment. His religiousness is deeply rooted in his belief in the oneness of the worlds of human beings and spirits, and the conviction that only the man in harmony with the supernatural powers can prosper in this life.

#### BARDS AND CRAFTSMEN ASSOCIATED WITH THE ABORIGINALS.

##### *Pardhans.*

In the greater part of the literature on the Gonds of the Central Provinces the Pardhans are described as the priests of the Gonds. This denomination is definitely misleading; while in places where aboriginal culture is in decay the position may have become obscured, the Pardhans in Adilabad and the adjoining area of the Central Provinces cannot by any stretch of imagination be endowed with priestly functions. They are the hereditary bards of the Gonds, and the songs and stories which they preserve by oral transmission are the most important depositories of Gond tradition. Their presence at many, though by no means the majority, of religious rites is obligatory, but at these they function only as musicians, never as priests.<sup>1</sup> In regarding them as such we should be as mistaken as a spectator at a Roman Catholic High Mass who assumes that the solo-singers—performing perhaps a Mass by Beethoven—are the main executants of the ritual.

As bards and guardians of tradition the Pardhans play a vital rôle in Gond culture, and I have often noticed that where the Pardhans discard their fiddle and abandon their ancient association with Gonds, their own as well as their former patrons' cultural life suffers the loss of a vital element. This development, however, has as yet hardly touched the central highlands with its compact aboriginal population, and is confined to areas such as the plains of Kinwat.

1. The story quoted by R. V. Russell (*op. cit.* Vol. IV., pp. 354) which implies that the Pardhans' function by divine appointment as priests of the Gonds, is unknown in Adilabad.



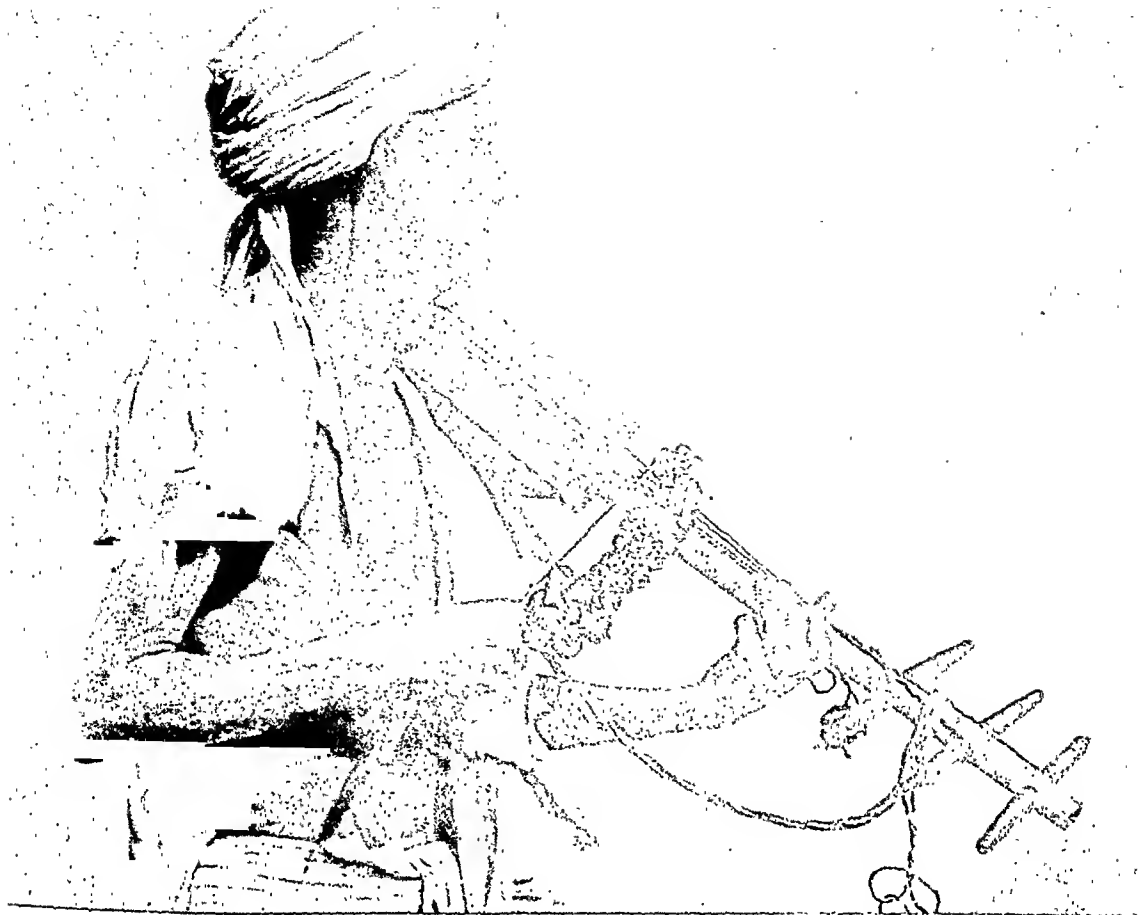


FIG. 27. Kanaka Manku, a famous Pardhan of Pulera, playing the *kingri*.

FIG. 28. Kanaka Ramu, a Pardhan of Pulera, playing the *pepre*.



Many Gond villages contain several houses of Pardhans. They stand usually a little apart from the other houses, but are of the same construction though often rather small. Nowadays a good many Pardhans have taken to agriculture, and work on the fields like any Gond. But this is not their traditional occupation, and even to-day there are numerous Pardhans who live only on what they receive from Gonds as wages for their performances and on the fees due to them in their capacity as House Pardhans.

The most important possession of a Pardhan is his *kingri*, a string instrument with three cords and a square wooden sound-box covered by a skin-membrane. On this fiddle Pardhans play during certain

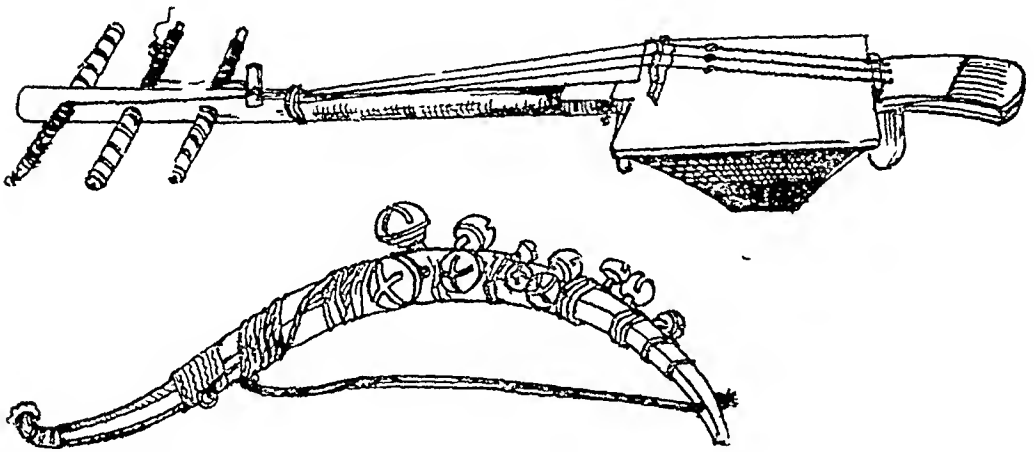


FIG. IV. *Pardhan's kingri and bow made of an antelope's horn.*

phases of the Persa Pen rites and accompany themselves when singing hymns or reciting epics. At festivals it is usually the most prominent Pardhan who plays the *kingri*, while younger men blow trumpets and beat drums (Figs. 27, 28, 47).

In their dress Pardhan men are indistinguishable from Gonds, but women wear as a rule a *choli* or bodice of the type customary among all the lower Hindu castes, and their forehead is often painted with a red caste mark.

In their social observances, marriage customs and funeral-rites they follow in practically every detail the Gond pattern; their accompanying songs are however generally in Marathi. They worship the same gods as the Gonds and attend most of their religious ceremonies, but without ever taking the part of the officiating priest. Only at rites performed individually by each family, such as for instance the First Sowing of his own crops, does the Pardhan householder himself conduct the ceremony and make the offerings.

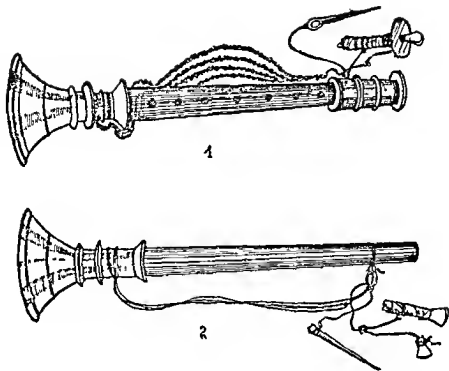


FIG V *Pardhan trumpets 1 Pepe and 2 Bonga which are usually played together,*

### *Totis*

Not all Gonds have Pardhans as hereditary bards. In some clans and families a function similar to that of the House Pardhan is performed by a member of another tribe of bards and minstrels: the Totis. R. V. Russell<sup>1</sup> and others have described the Totis as a sub-tribe of the Pardhans, but I wonder whether this classification can be upheld. The mode of life of the two castes and their peculiar relationship to Gonds are no doubt identical, but while in Adilabad the Pardhans' own language is Marathi, the Totis speak here Gondi as their mother-tongue, and claim an association with the Gonds older than that of any Pardhan. The Totis are not very numerous, in physical type they seem to be slightly more primitive than the average Pardhan and their pigmentation is much darker.

In the social scale they rank lower than Pardhans and I have heard Gonds say that just as the Pardhans beg from them, the Totis beg from Pardhans. But by this they probably only mean that Totis would beg even at a Pardhan's door and not that they are attached to individual Pardhan families like a *rota patari* is to his Gond patrons.

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit. Vol. IV, p. 354

The stories and songs recited by Totis are even to verbal identity largely the same as those of Pardhans, but it is said that the particular speciality of Totis are stories of the god Bhimana. They too accompany themselves on the *kingri*, the three-stringed fiddle, and blow trumpets on ceremonial occasions.

Many Toti women are expert in tattooing and the elaborate tattoo covering the arms, shoulders, and chests of many Gond women are their work. For this they are paid in cash or grain, and they make regular visits to the Gond villages where their services are likely to be required.

Most of what has been said of the Pardhans applies also to the Totis; they worship the Gond gods, have part in the same social system, and observe the same social customs. But it seems that they are less inclined to exchange their ancestral rôle of bards for agriculture, and very few Totis have attained the status of independent cultivators.

### *Khatis.*

Perhaps not as intimate and permanent as the tie between the Gonds and their bards, yet in many respects similar is the association of certain craftsmen with the aboriginals of the Adilabad District. These craftsmen, who supply both Gonds and Kolams with most of their essential implements, with many cherished ornaments, and even with ritual objects, have to a large extent been absorbed in the pattern of aboriginal society. Like Pardhans and Totis they live in the Gonds' villages and are often as fluent in Gondi as in their own mother-tongue.

Foremost among these craftsmen rank the Khatis or blacksmiths, a people of progressive physical type with regular features and slender build, showing most of the features of Eickstedt's Indid type.<sup>1</sup> They speak Marathi, but instead of the exogamous divisions current among the blacksmiths of Marathwara, they have the same clans as Gonds and Pardhans, grouped in phratries which are exogamous and characterized by the number of their *wen*. Their inclusion in the Gond system is, however, not as complete as that of Pardhans and Totis, and they take no active part in the cult of the clan-deities, though they are not debarred from attending the ceremonies.

Unlike such blacksmiths as the Agaria of the Central Provinces, who are looked down upon by Gonds, the Khatis enjoy a comparatively good social status and they may enter the Gonds' houses. But Gonds and Khatis do not partake of each others' food.

A Khati works not only in his own village, where he has a small smithy, but goes with his instruments and bellows to the surrounding settlements and works there in improvised shelters and under trees. Whoever wants implements repaired or new implements made supplies the Khati with charcoal and sometimes lends a hand in the work. The

1. C. f. E. v. Eickstedt, 'The Position of Mysore in India's Racial History,' in *The Mysore Tribes and Castes*, Mysore, 1935, Vol. I, pp. 34-36.

iron is generally bought in a bazaar by the client, but there are also iron smelters of Telugu stock in such places as Dasturabad. From those Gonds and Kolams for whom they work regularly the Khatis receive annually a fixed amount of grain and in return do all repairs and make new implements from iron supplied by the client. This is their main income, cash payments from casual customers from a much smaller part of their income.

The Khatis have no monopoly of the forge, for Gonds as well as Kolams are not debarred from blacksmith's work by any taboo, and some of them have themselves set up smithies in their own villages. Both they and the Khatis use hand bellows of cow hide which are blown by a man squatting beside the furnace, nowhere in Adilabad have I seen the double bellows treadled underfoot such as are used by the Koya blacksmiths of Warangal District.

### Wojaris

Wojaris or Otaris are a caste of brass founders widely scattered over both Gondwana and Marathwara. Only a small number of families seem to live more or less permanently among the Gonds and these have adopted Gondh clan names. Like the Khatis they remain outside the cult-organization based on the Gond clan system, and do not usually share in the religious ceremonies of the Gonds.

It is they who manufacture the sacred bells, which are among the symbols of the Persa Pen, the small idols of brass placed in the shrines of various gods and parts of the trumpets of Pardhans and Totis. So important are these objects in Gond religion that even the myths tell of the Wojari from whom the culture hero Pahandi Kupar Lingal obtained their proto-types.

Cheap ornaments of brass and white metal such as rings, toe-rings, and armlets are also made by Wojaris and have a wide market among Gond women. In all their work the Wojari use the *cire perdue* process, i.e. they mould their object first in wax, embed the wax form in damp clay, bake the clay-mould, allow the wax to flow out and then pour molten metal into the empty mould (Fig. 29).

Though Wojari families sometimes settle for several years in a Gond village they are by habit rather unsteady, and seem to have no attachment to any particular locality. Their trade necessitates a great deal of wandering for only by moving from village to village can they peddle their wares and remain in touch with their customers.

Their social status is similar to that of the Khatis, they may enter the Gonds' houses but unlike Pardhans and Totis, they do not eat food cooked by Gonds. How it came that a section of the Wojaris adopted the clan system of the Gonds, with whom otherwise they have so little in common is not easily explained. But it may be that in former times certain Wojari families stood in the permanent employ of Gond rajas,



and thus became known by the clan-names of their masters.

#### NON-ABORIGINAL POPULATIONS.

Besides those bards and craftsmen who, though themselves not of aboriginal stock, have lived for centuries within the orbit of Gond culture, certain communities of a very different order share to-day the aboriginal's habitat and in many places even his village. These communities have few traditional associations with the Gonds; they are for the greater part new comers who invaded the country only when the power of the Gond chiefs was broken and the land thrown open to new settlers. Their economy is largely not complementary to that of the Gonds but competitive, and in many cases they have succeeded in ousting the aboriginals from their ancestral lands. These immigrant populations may be roughly divided into landowners, cultivators, traders and craftsmen, but for our purposes it will be more convenient to group them according to their linguistic and cultural background into Marathi and Telugu speaking castes, Banjaras and Mussalmans. Naturally no full description of these 'progressive' populations can be attempted here and we will mention only those who exert a cultural and economic influence on the Gonds.

Yet a few remarks on the outstanding features of Marathwara and Telingana in general may help the reader to visualize the setting of Gond culture in this border-land between Aryan and Dravidian civilizations.

The difference in atmosphere between Marathwara and Telingana is so pronounced that even the most superficial observer can hardly overlook it. The landscape in Marathwara is stern, with wide stretches of dry crops and stony hills rising suddenly from undulating plains, while an occasional fort perched on a rocky peak introduces here and there a note of grandeur; Telingana is smiling and exuberant, enlivened even in the hot season by numerous lotus-covered tanks, brilliant irrigated rice-fields and topes of the elegant palmyra palm. Entirely in keeping with this scene is an element of flamboyance in rural Telugu culture; the people wear a great deal of colour, the men dressing in red and purple turbans and often petunia-coloured *dhoti*, the women in bright *sari* of the gayest shades; they deck themselves with flashy jewellery but show little concern over housing; they are loud and boisterous in speech, vivacious among themselves, but rather sullen towards outsiders. The Marathas are in comparison austere, the women dress in more subdued colours, and the men except for a red turban almost entirely in white, wearing rarely any but the plainest jewellery. There is a feeling of solidity about their villages, the houses are well built and well kept, the people are quieter but on the whole more hospitable and friendly to strangers. Distinctions of caste and wealth seem to have among them less significance than among the Telugu folks, and

the old martial spirit seems to have bred a certain spirit of *camaraderie* among all classes of villagers. The Maratha peasant is upright and self-possessed before superiors, and though sometimes perhaps harsh, not overbearing towards his inferiors. One does not find in Marathwara the same exaggerated servility of the lower castes as in Telugu areas. It may be that a capitalistic system with big land owners and a large class of landless agricultural labourers was long dominant in Telingana, while smaller holdings and a prosperous independent peasantry were features of rural Maratha society.

Apart from these cultural differences there is, of course, also the contrast in physical type. Most Marathas are of comparatively light colour, athletic build and prominent facial features, the Telugus, with the exception of some Brahmin families, are of dark complexion, which has in some young women a lovely bluish undertone, they are more delicately built with soft rounded features, their movements are graceful, ranging from vivid agitation to a mature lassitude.

Seldom can ideas and associations originating in Europe be so well applied to Indian conditions as if we describe the atmosphere of Marathwara as 'northern' and that of Telingana as 'southern'. The Telugus have indeed all the characteristics which we are used to associate with a southern people, and their melodious language has often been described as the Italian of India, the more reserved Marathas and their more puritan style of living appears in contrast definitely 'northern'. But both the universality of Hinduism with its blurred many distinctions.

### Telugu Castes

The area where Gond . . .  
 vary and . . .  
 . . . and the town while many  
 who among a . . .  
 They buy the . . .  
 grain and let . . .  
 called, has become an indispensable institution in Gond economy ever since a system based on exchange of goods and services gave way to a system ruled by payments in money. The Komtis, like the Banias in other parts of India, are shrewd and often unscrupulous traders, who use every means to bring their clients into a state of complete dependency. They lend out money at a rate of interest of at least 25 per cent. per annum, but being well content if within a few years an enormous

debt has accumulated, do not press for prompt payment. From that moment they can demand from their unfortunate debtor regular payments in money and goods with little probability of the debt ever being cleared. Gonds owning land often tender it as surety and once this has happened the *sahukar* is almost certain to appropriate their land on the pretext of unpaid debts, notwithstanding that in the course of years he has received several times the principal amount.<sup>1</sup> Thus many of the Komtis residing at Asifabad and other centres of trade have become big landlords and own numerous villages with a predominantly aboriginal population. Often town-bred and town-minded they cannot be called good landlords; regarding their villages purely as commercial enterprises they let out their land to those tenants who can pay the highest rent and do not hesitate to replace Gonds who may have cultivated the land for generations by immigrants from other districts, more experienced in agricultural methods. Thus the acquisition of a village by a Komti has at the best meant for the Gond cultivators the burden of rents several times the Government land-revenue and at the worst expulsion and replacement by tenants of other caste.<sup>2</sup>

In view of the dispossession of numerous Gonds by members of the Komti caste, one may be inclined to consider the institution of the *sahukar* as an unmitigated evil. Yet, its advantages for the Gond must not be overlooked. The *sahukar* is for him a kind of insurance who will in most cases help him over bad times due to failure of crops or personal misfortune. No doubt the price a Gond has to pay for this security is exorbitant, but if he has a permanent connection with a *sahukar*, he knows that the latter will not let him starve, and will almost certainly advance him the cash sums required for the payment of land-revenue or fines.

Thus the Komti has become an almost indispensable element in Gond economy, and while many a Gond will grumble over the high rates of interest and the rapaciousness of his *sahukar*, he will not seriously consider standing on his own feet.

The Komtis belong to one of the highest castes of Telugu society and there is for them no question of any but business relations with their Gond clients. But although they are fully aware that Gonds sacrifice and eat cows, they do not treat them in the same manner as such out-castes as Malas and Madigas.

Another high Hindu caste with whom the Gonds come frequently in touch are the Brahmins, many of whom hold the position of hereditary *patwari* or village-accountants. According to the present Hyderabad revenue-system there is for each village or group of villages a

1. Since this was written H.E.H. the Nizam's Government has brought into force anti-alienation laws preventing the transfer of the land of Gonds to non-aboriginals.

2. A Tenancy Act passed in 1945 will go a long way in safeguarding the rights of the aboriginal cultivator.

*patwari* whose duty it is to keep the land register and the revenue accounts record all transfers of lands and supervise the collection of the land revenue. In settled progressive areas he is little more than a clerk, but in a district such as Adilabad, where the population is fluctuating and a large part of the land not held under permanent propriety rights, his importance is far greater. For here he can exert a considerable influence on the annual allotment of land for cultivation and even in the granting of permanent title deeds. His power is enhanced by the hereditary character of his office, while all higher revenue-officers are frequently transferred he remains on the spot and his information is therefore usually unchallenged. Most *patwari* have made the fullest use of this position and have gradually acquired a great deal of land which was formerly held by Gonds. This is not the place to discuss in detail the alienation of the aboriginals' land by other castes, but there can be no doubt that during the last fifty years a very considerable part of the Gonds' ancestral land has passed into the hands of Brahmin *patwari* families.

The Gonds regard these Brahmin *patwari* and landlords with resentment and suspicion, and one often hears them complain that the Gond Raj has given way to a Raj of Brahmins and Komtus. They feel none of the ordinary Hindus' respect for the Brahmin and to accept cooked food from the hand of a Brahmin would be cause for excommunication. The Brahmins in turn recognise that Gonds stand on a plane different from that of the Hindu population and in spite of their beef eating refrain from treating them as untouchables, it seems that in this respect they adopt towards the aboriginals the same attitude as towards Mussalmans and Christians. Another powerful section of Telugu society with which the Gonds come often in contact are the Velmas. This caste of cultivators and substantial land owners is widely distributed over most parts of Telingana and claims Kshatriya origin. Rajas of Velma caste are reported to have held the forts of Nirmal and Utnur but the appearance of Velmas in other parts of Adilabad District is of comparatively recent date. Hardly more than fifty or sixty years have passed since Velma landowners of the neighbouring district of Karimnagar turned their eyes to the fertile lowlands in the riverain tracts of the taluqs of Chinnur and Lakshetpet. Later they extended their holdings to the uplands of Asifabad Taluq and once they had secured a foothold in an area few Gonds could stand up to their wealth and resourcefulness in the competition for land. In the early years of the century many Gonds lost their rights in the lands wrested from them into the hands of Velmas. Some continued to reside in Karimnagar or in the plains of Lakshetpet Taluq and had to pay bailiffs of their villages to paid bailiffs. The Gonds have received little consideration for the welfare

and Brahmins, the tendency to replace aboriginals by more expert cultivators imported from the densely populated part of Karimnagar.

Thus in the wake of the Velmas followed in many places Kapus, the great cultivating caste of Telingana. Their attachment to the land is as great as, in this time of rapidly expanding population, their hunger for land, and where Velmas acquired villages in former Gond country, landless Kapus were only too willing to settle as their tenants. Other Kapus came in compact groups across the Godavari and spread over the plains on the southern fringe of the Adilabad District. Unlike the Velmas they did not seek land for the sake of hiring it out at a profit, but settled in the villages and worked on the fields themselves. Thereby they entered into immediate competition with the Gonds, and by their comparative affluence resulting from better agricultural methods and superior experience in marketing, and by their greater power of asserting themselves, they usually succeeded in pressing out the Gonds and acquiring most of their land. Once established, Kapus will seldom let aboriginals stay on the land as tenants, and at the best they will employ the Gond as a daily labourer. Consequently the influx of Kapus into an area leads usually sooner or later to a withdrawal of Gonds from the main villages to outlying hamlets, and often to their complete disappearance from the locality. This can be observed in the block of Telugu villages round Adilabad as well as in many parts of the Godavari valley. In spite of the close contact between Kapus and Gonds living in the same village, there is very little cultural exchange, and the Gonds do not seem to have been greatly influenced by the Kapus' social customs or religious ideas. Both communities decline to partake of the other's food, and keep as a rule very much to themselves.

The Gonds' relations with most craftsmen of Telingana are of a very superficial nature. At markets, they buy the wares of potters, weavers and tailors, and a wealthy Gond may occasionally call a carpenter to his village to carve a door or a marriage post. Gold and silver-ornaments are purchased from Sonars who live in the bigger villages of the plains and come to fairs, such as the Keslapur *jatra*. All these transactions are executed on a cash basis, and there is in them no institutional factor as in the relations between Gonds and Khatis. On a slightly different basis are the Gonds' relations with those Telugu potters from whom they order their *gumela* drums as well as the clay horses and elephants used as votive offerings; the traditional payment for a pair of drums is one fowl and one or two seers of rice, and for a large clay-animal the price is a calf.

No appreciable impression on Gond culture has been produced by the contact with such menial castes as Malas and Madigas. Leather-workers of Madiga caste live in some Gond villages, their small houses usually at a fair distance from Gond dwellings. They function as village servants and supply the Gonds with sandals and other leather

goods. In their treatment the Gonds have followed the lead of Telugu society and consider them—rather illogically—as untouchables although to Gond sentiment the Madigas habit of beef-eating and their work on cow's hide is in no way repulsive.

A somewhat exceptional position among the Telugu speaking castes that have infiltrated into the Gond country is held by the Bestas or fisherman who are now found in the vicinity of tanks and the larger streams. Their primitive physical features and their type of economy suggest that they are of aboriginal stock, but their origin still lies in the dark. They catch fish with nets of various kinds as well as bamboo-traps, and sell them in the bazaars or barter them for grain. Often they supplement their food supply by digging for jungle roots with digging sticks or by working as agricultural labourers. Nearly all Bestas keep pigs and it is from them that the Gonds and Kolams buy pigs for certain sacrifices. For though not debarred from pig keeping by any taboo the Gonds of to day are not in the habit of breeding pigs, and I know of only one progressive Gond who among other innovations, has recently introduced pigs into his village. All others obtain sacrificial pigs from Bestas and itinerant Waddars.

Besides the Telugu populations settled in Adilabad District there are wandering entertainers from other parts of the country who visit the Gond villages and do a good deal to brighten the life of the villagers. They tour in parties of three to ten persons—men, women and children and amuse the Gonds by juggling tricks, dancing and singing and the acting of small dramatic scenes receiving in return food and modest cash gifts. These jugglers and musicians who mainly come from Karimnagar District, are as a rule quite welcome and must be clearly distinguished from the bands of itinerant fakirs and so-called sadhus, who do nothing to enlighten the people.

Both the ... .. songs in a religious or moral sense

... .. as Rama, Sita and Ravana, or the Pandava brothers. But the influence they exert remains as yet on the surface and the sadhus make no conscious effort to propagate among the Gonds the principles of any particular Hindu sect.

### *Maratha Castes*

To-day the Telugu population of Adilabad District is almost three times as numerous as the castes speaking Marathi as their mother tongue, but historical evidence tends to show that within the last two or three centuries it is the Marathas who have exerted a greater cultural

influence on the Gonds and that even a hundred and fifty years ago they were the politically predominant element in many parts of the district. It has already been mentioned that until 1803 almost the whole of the district was included in Berar, then jointly administered by the Nizam and the Bhonsle of Nagpur, while Rajura Taluq with the fortress of Manikgarh was under the undivided rule of this Maratha dynasty.

Yet although under Maratha rule a number of high-caste Hindus were established as hereditary *deshmukh*, permanent settlers of Maratha stock do not seem to have been numerous in the district, and most of the Marathi speaking cultivators now found in the west and north say that it was only their fathers or grandfathers who immigrated from Berar or other areas of Marathwara.

In the taluqs of Kinwat and Adilabad, as well as in parts of Utnur and Both, Maratha Brahmins play a rôle similar to that of the Telugu Brahmins in Asifabad Taluq. They hold most of the *patwari* posts by hereditary right and this has enabled them to amass a great deal of land, which they hire out to both aboriginals and Maratha cultivators. It seems that they and the other higher Maratha castes are less tolerant of Gond custom than their Telugu counterparts, and many Gonds in Kinwat have given up the sacrifice of cows, because, as they say, the Hindus threaten to treat them as outcastes if they persist in the practice. Apart from the Brahmin families which furnish *patwari* and other minor officials, there are a few Brahmin houses of high standing, such as the Rajas of Udaram, who were of importance even in Aurangzeb's time and hold now a large estate in the vicinity of Mahur.

In the areas with predominant Maratha influence the money-lender's place is mainly filled by *sahukar* of Marwari caste whose homeland is distant Gujerat. For Maratha society does not contain an indigenous class of money-lenders, and Marwaris have spread over the whole of Marathwara. In their dealings with Gonds they do not differ appreciably from Komtis, except perhaps in that they do not always reside at the centres of trade; isolated Marwari families live in some of the larger Gond villages.

The great land-owning caste of Marathwara are the Marathas,<sup>1</sup> a caste of martial traditions and high social status. In the western parts of Adilabad District a good many Marathas are found to-day scattered over many villages, sometimes living side by side with Gonds. Most of them are substantial farmers who own a considerable amount of land and have a comparatively high standard of living. Residing in the villages where they own land, they manage their holdings themselves, and often employ Gonds as agricultural labourers. But the majority are new comers, who remember well when they, their fathers

1. The term Maratha in the loose sense of the word is applied to all the Marathi speaking inhabitants of Marathwara; but in its stricter sense it applies only to a caste of land owners and warriors who were once the leaders of Maratha society.

or grandfathers immigrated from the Districts of Nander or Parbhani or from Berar. Almost identical to that of the Marathas is the position of some Marathi speaking Rajputs: most of them are fairly prosperous land-owners. I have also met Rajputs who live in the style of simple cultivators in close proximity with Gonds and some even speak Gondi.

Far more numerous than either the Marathas or Rajputs are the Kunbis who form the main peasant population of Berar and from there have filtered across the Penganga into the northern areas of Adilabad District. They are cultivators famed for their industriousness and thrift and correspond roughly to the Kapus of Telingana. In the plains of the Adilabad and Rajura Taluqs they have during the last hundred years acquired much land which was formerly held by Gonds, but those who failed to obtain land of their own have remained as the tenants of big land-owners. Naturally the Gonds do not look with favour on the occupation of much of their former land by the immigrants, and there are instances of tension between the wealthy Kunbis and the dispossessed Gonds.

But where both communities stand on the same economic level, particularly in the villages of Rajura for Muslim landlords the relations between Kunbis and Gonds are generally cordial and it seems indeed that they are not separated by the same cultural and psychological gulf as lies between Gonds and Telugu peasants. The explanation may partly be found in the different temperament of the Kunbis, and partly in the greater number of cultural elements which the two castes share. Probably owing to the political influence of the Marathas in former times, Gond culture has absorbed several Maratha usages, and so it is that both Gonds and Kunbis celebrate such feasts as Pola with ceremonies only slightly differing and that they worship Mahadeo and Maroti (Hanuman) at the same village shrines. Even so Kunbis and Gonds remain very definitely distinct communities and there is in mixed villages nothing approaching a common social life.

Another class of agriculturists who of late have immigrated from the Central Provinces and Berar and come now in frequent contact with the Gonds are the Malis or Marars. They are expert in gardening and it is perhaps their example that has encouraged some Gonds of Kunwat Taluq to raise a modest amount of garden crops. Occasionally one finds families of Malis living in Gond villages and it seems that in cultural respects they are rather the giving than the receiving part.

Among the more numerous agricultural castes there are moreover the Andhs, found now in considerable strength in Both Taluq. They are good cultivators but few of them own land and their status in Hindu society is not high. Though in the Central Provinces they are regarded as a forest and hill tribe, in Adilabad apparently in the position



are without exception recent immigrants from adjacent districts and are so hinduized that the Gonds consider them in the same light as other Maratha castes.

Among the craftsmen of Marathwara the Inkars, low-caste cotton-weavers, have perhaps most importance in Gond economy. Small colonies of Inkars are attached to Gond villages even in areas with an otherwise almost purely aboriginal population; they weave cloth from cotton which they either grow themselves or purchase from local cultivators and, accepting payment in both cash and grain, sell it in the vicinity. Occasionally Gonds give cotton to Inkars with the order to make it up into cloth and pay for the labour at an agreed rate, but in recent times machine-made textiles sold cheaply in the bazaars have entered into competition with the Inkars' less well finished products and many Gonds prefer to sell their entire cotton crop to wholesale merchants and to buy whatever cloth they require in the open market. Thus the local weavers are cut out and want of employment in their traditional craft has forced them to seek other means of subsistence. Some have taken to agricultural labour, while a few, using the business sense acquired by generations of peddling cloth, have established themselves as petty money-lenders.

The Inkars are a subdivision of the large caste of Mahars which throughout Marathwara constitutes the bulk of the outcaste population. In many Gond villages there are Mahars, who have either never woven or have given up their craft and now function as village-messengers or *kotwal*; for it would seem that Gonds find it convenient to entrust the unpopular task of collecting supplies for touring officials to outsiders. Mahars stand like the Malas of Telingana at the very bottom of the social scale, and are treated as untouchables by Gonds and Hindus alike.

Besides those Khatis and Wojaris who have adopted the Gond system of clan-names there are other blacksmiths and brass-founders who have Marathi septs and evince no cultural assimilation with Gond society. They are found mainly in the open country where Gonds live in symbiosis with other populations and work for Gonds as for any other client, cash payments replacing more and more the old system of inter-caste barter. The same applies of course to other Marathi-speaking craftsmen such as potters and carpenters.

As various sadhus from Telingana cross the Godavari and wander through the Gond country, so the orange-robed Gosains of the hill-monastery of Sikar, near Mahur, visit the villages of Gonds begging for alms and spreading, more incidentally than with definite intent of religious propaganda, certain superficial traits of Maratha culture.

### *The Banjara Tribes.*

An ethnic element, entirely different in origin, culture and race

from both Maratha and Telugu castes and constituting doubtless the newest addition to the population pattern of the district are the semi-nomadic tribes of Banjaras Lambaras<sup>1</sup> Mathuras and Wanjars. Their homeland is Northern India and it was only in the wake of Muslim armies that they wandered southward and established themselves in many parts of the Deccan. While Banjaras were engaged both in cattle breeding and in the transport of goods on the backs of their pack-bullocks Mathuras were cattle-breeders *par excellence*, with no other means of subsistence than their large herds with whom they wandered from grazing ground to grazing ground. When modern means of transport outstripped the Banjaras bullock caravans many of them took to agriculture with particular emphasis on the raising of live stock. Other Banjaras however were less successful in their transition to a new economy drifted from place to place in search of occasional labour and owing to their inclination to petty theft were in some places listed among the Criminal Tribes.

In Adilabad District the settlement of Banjaras is of very recent date and old men still remember the time when the first immigrants arrived. Berar which lay on one of the main trade routes between Southern and Northern India on the other hand is an old centre of Banjara assemblage and it was from there that at the end of the last century they filtered across the Penganga into the then sparsely populated plains of Khamvat and Adilabad. This infiltration has not yet come to an end and I have seen Banjaras arriving with their cattle, carts and belongings from Yeotmal District to settle in Gond villages. When no more land was available in the riverain plains the new comers pushed up into the broad valleys and ultimately even on to the plateaux and to-day a great many Banjaras live in the heart of the Gond country. Generally more affluent and always far shrewder than the Gonds they succeeded in acquiring considerable areas of land previously cultivated by Gonds and in Utur Taluq one finds Banjaras who own several hundred acres but cultivate only a small part themselves, hiring out the rest at high rents. In their relations with Gonds they are with a few notable exceptions oppressive and ruthless employing their greater business sense and their powerful physique coupled with a domineering temperament to bully and intimidate their Gond neighbours. Once Banjaras gain a foothold in a village it is generally lost to Gonds or Kolams.

The Mathuras have retained their old form of economy to a greater extent than the Banjaras and still subsist mainly by cattle breeding and the sale of milk products. They assert that among the Banjara tribes they occupy a position similar to that of the Brahmmins among the

1 Although the Banjara tribes recognize a difference between Banjaras and Lambaras, in this context I have used the term Banjaras for both groups for the slight differences in the status and customs have no bearing on their relations with the Gonds.

Hindus, and that their religion debars them from living in solid houses. Agriculture is for them but a side-line, and many Mathuras live the greater part of the year in forest areas where they find good grazing for their cattle. There they build temporary settlements, usually without attempting to raise even garden-crops. Though here and there they have acquired land, primarily with a view to securing a claim to residence in a locality with good grazing, they have not seriously entered the scramble for land and the main cause for occasional conflict with Gonds is the damage done by their cattle to the latter's crops.

Ultimately there are the Wanjaris, to-day a caste of settled peasant proprietors; they disclaim all connection with the nomadic Banjaras, but are yet most likely of the same stock. They are only found in the western parts of Both Taluq and are recent immigrants from Parbhani and Nander; despite the short association with their new lands they are well-established.

The cultural influence of Banjaras and associated tribes on the Gonds is as yet negligible. These tribes speak their own languages, and have their own set of customs which distinguishes them from the local Hindu population as much as from the Gonds. Even in their colourful dress, which follows a North Indian pattern, they have not adapted themselves to the cultural—and indeed climatic—atmosphere of the Deccan. With their tall stature, fair skin and light eyes, Banjaras and Mathuras appear even at a glance as 'foreigners' in this part of India.

#### MUSSALMANS.

Mogul generals were the first foreign invaders who brought the Gond Kingdoms of the Deccan under effective control. Numerous are the songs and stories of the fights of Gond heroes against the armies of the "Delhi Raja," as the Mogul Emperor is called in Gond folklore, and of the fortunate or unfortunate, but always creditable, experiences of Gond Rajas at the Mogul court. Often these stories end with the triumph or at least the successful escape of the Gond hero, but there are others which tell of the Gond Raja's death after a valiant fight. All Gonds know, of course, that final victory lay with the Mussalmans, to whom in Gondi they refer as 'Turkal,' and they have not forgotten that they are a conquered race. In the territories now included in the Central Provinces, Mogul rule was followed by Maratha rule, and the Gonds soon learnt the difference between the ordered and on the whole rather loose administration of the Moguls and the oppressive depredations of Maratha chieftains. But in the area of the Adilabad District Muslim rule continued at least nominally even during the years of the co-regnum with the Bhonsle Rajas, and after 1803 A.D. when the treaty of Deogaon provided for the cession of the whole of the territory south of the Penganga to the Nizam of Hyderabad.

Since then Mussalmans have controlled this part of Gondwana, as

the old Mogul historians used to call the country of the Gonds. During almost a century their hand lay but lightly on their subjects and local Gond Rajas and chieftains continued in the same feudal style as of old. But when some fifty years ago attempts were made to raise the revenue of the district by throwing it open to immigrants of neighbouring areas, the administration was tightened and the Gonds began to realize that it was the Mussalman who wielded the power. Gradually their freedom of action was narrowed by a bureaucracy almost entirely staffed by Mussalmans and the various Government departments took charge of all resources of the country.

The Gonds still remember the time when no forest-laws interfered with their system of agriculture, no excise-rules deprived them of liquor, and the fruits of the jungle were not auctioned to non-aboriginal contractors. When Government restricted the utilization of what the Gonds considered their own by ancient right, there was wide-spread resentment and Mussalmans, as the principal agents of Government in these restrictive measures, were believed to be responsible for all encroachments on the traditional Gond economy. As in other backward areas of India, there was a good deal of friction between the aboriginals and subordinate Government servants, but the bitterness of the Gonds towards oppressive forest guards or police constables was not rooted in any communal feeling. Most Gonds are discerning enough to judge officials by their merits and attach themselves with loyal affection to those Muslim officers who have shown real sympathy for their problems.

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not pass unnoticed in what is called *turkal gohti*, the Mussalman's language. Another tangible influence of Islamic culture is the celebration of the Moharrum festival. Though the Gonds know nothing of its meaning, they

of Husain and to cor  
end of the feast. In

the fact that Mussalmans worship only one god. And by using, when speaking Urdu, the term *Khuda* or *Allah*, synonymously with Bhagavan, Mahadeo and Shambu Pen, the Gonds imply that the God of the Mussalmans corresponds to the supreme deity of their own religious system.

In the social sphere, on the other hand, Muslim ideas have little influence on aboriginal culture. Nothing could be more contradictory to Muslim custom, for instance, than the freedom and independence of

Gond and Kolam women. Yet the Gonds show no inclination to adopt the standards of the ruling race, and bitterly resent the occasional interference of the police in cases of marriage by elopement or capture. They feel that it is unjust to impose on them sentences under a Code conflicting with their own notions of right and wrong. It is only certain Raja families who in a half-hearted way have begun to conform to Muslim ideas of feminine modesty, and when strangers are about their women-folk keep out of sight.

Besides the Government officers and their servants, only a few classes of Mussalmans come in close touch with Gonds. Until a recent change in the system of disposing of minor forest produce many Muslims took Government contracts for the exploitation of grass, mahua-flowers<sup>1</sup> and chironjis,<sup>2</sup> and levied fees from Gonds for the use of these articles. Naturally they were not welcome visitors in the villages. Moreover there are Mussalmans, usually residing in such towns as Adilabad and Asifabad, or even in Hyderabad, who have acquired land and run their villages as commercial enterprises in much the same way as Brahmin, Komti or Velma landlords. They have as a rule very little personal contact with their tenants and, though they are an important factor in the economic development of the tribe, their cultural influence on the Gonds is insignificant.

Distinct from the Hyderabad Mussalmans are the Rohillas, a tribe of Pathan origin. During the 19th century bands of militant Rohillas were a scourge of many outlying districts, and became notorious for their depredations. Of late they have settled down to more peaceful occupations, acquiring land and setting up as money-lenders, but their violent temperament still makes them feared among the local aborigines. An equally alien element in the rural scene are the Arabs who came to the Deccan as mercenaries and are still used in guarding local treasuries. Many of them have settled at taluq headquarters and gone into trade and the money-lending business; some take Government contracts for minor forest-produce and liquor-shops, while others are employed by *sahukar* and landlords to dun and intimidate their creditors and tenants. Though famous for their courage and reliability as soldiers and watchmen, once discharged from Government employ they tend to become an unruly and even a criminal element, and some of them are the terror of rural areas.

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This enumeration of the various populations now sharing the Gonds' habitat may lead the reader to believe that their independent tribal life must belong to the past. However, this is not so. While in many parts of the plains the Gonds are indeed hemmed in on all sides by

1. The corollæ of *Bassia latifolia*.

2. The fruits of *Buchanania latifolia*.

other castes and the growth of their culture is crippled by economic thralldom, in wide areas of the central highlands weeks may still pass without any outsider finding his way to the Gond villages tucked away in secluded valleys. There Gond culture still flourishes, perhaps not in so grand a style as of old when rajas held court in mountain fortresses, but with its spirit yet fully alive and its complex ritual observed in traditional manner.



FIG. 31. Muslim  
of Adilabad  
District.



FIG. 32. Lam-  
bara of Adilabad  
District.



FIG. 33 The scattered hamlets of the village of Suts Harapur

FIG. 34 The plateau of Marla at Suts from the valley bottom





## CHAPTER III.

### VILLAGES.

THE Gonds' country and the motley of races peopling the plains and lower valleys have now taken shape and we can turn our eyes to the manner in which the Gonds have made it their home and fitted their settlements to the natural forms of landscape. Is there such a thing as a typical Gond village? The answer to this question must be in the negative, and I could point to three villages, each radically different from the other, yet all unmistakably Gond settlements. If in times when the Gonds were absolutely free to choose their village-sites they evolved, by favouring a certain combination of environmental features, a standard type of settlement, this time must lie far back, and the variety of settings in which we find their villages to-day is as great as the diversity of the country's colourful scenery. For Gonds live high up on the plateau round the old fortress of Manikgarh, from whose battlements raised above precipitous cliffs you look down on the softly moulded foothills and across the hazy lowlands to the silvery ribbon of the distant Penganga; they live in hamlets tucked away in bamboo-filled valleys; and they live in the large villages of the plains amidst long stretches of chequered fields and groups of old tamarind and mango trees.

In all these different surroundings we find ancient Gond sites, sanctified by the shrines of clan-deities and mentioned in many a legend and myth. To gain a picture of the material background of Gond life, the traveller must journey through the villages of the plains and lower valleys up on to the plateaux and then across the central highlands, visiting some of the remote hamlets in the depth of the forests. If we approach the Gond country by railway either from Hyderabad or from the Central Provinces, and alight at Asifabad Road Station on the line linking Warangal with Chanda, the ancient seat of a famous Gond dynasty, we find ourselves in a cultivated plain, here and there broken by patches of shrubby jungle. In the west rise ranges of hills: their sparsely wooded slopes look uninhabited, and one would not suspect that they form the ramparts of plateaux dotted with villages and hamlets. A wide plain, traversed by a motor-road, stretches between the railway and Asifabad, the administrative centre of the taluq. Once this was Gond land, but since the improvement of communications has opened up the country to immigrants from Telingana, the Gonds have withdrawn from the plains and to-day not a single village on the motor-road is any longer

inhabited by Gonds. The immediate vicinity of Asifabad too is now an environment uncongenial to aboriginals, and many villages which even twenty years ago contained Gond communities of some strength have now an entirely non aboriginal population, while in others Gonds have lost their land and become tenants of big landowners or lead a precarious existence as farm hands.

The country is here almost flat and the villages lie on the high banks of streams, some of which are perennial, with still, green pools where men and cattle find water throughout the seasons, while others dry up in the hot weather and the villagers have to dig for water in the gravel of the stream bed. Tall tamarind trees, whose feathery branches often cast the only shade for miles around grow on the stream banks or in between the houses that are loosely grouped according to caste in straggling villages. Wherever Telugu land owners and peasants have settled in a village, their substantial houses some with tiled roofs, occupy the best sites in the centre while the Gonds in quarters of their own, live in thatched wattle-walled houses each homestead with its own fenced courtyard. The closer contact with such civilization as represented by the railway a bus service and the townsfolk of Asifabad has not raised their housing standards for with these civilizing influences came outsiders who deprived them of their lands and the deterioration in their economic status prevents them from profiting by the example of populations more advanced in material development. But although Gond dwellings cannot vie with the houses of prosperous Hindu peasants land owners and traders they are usually better and far cleaner than the houses of the low castes. The termen and such small clusters of houses are usually dled together in

Leaving Asifabad its rows of whitewashed buildings its court house and

As the Telugu stock form the predominant population we find a few villages of aboriginal population, they are small settlements of less than twenty houses lying on the edge of hill and valley while the large villages of Kapus occupy favoured positions in the bends of the river. Gradually hills and forest close in on the valley and at Ulipitta Dorli once the seat of a Gond raja of Atram clan but now inhabited by a mixed population we leave the open country of millet and cotton fields. A stony cart track, crossing and recrossing a boulder strewn stream climbs slowly uphill through dense shady forest. When we reach the first village clearing we are in the hills steep slopes covered with spraying bamboo enclose a triangular patch of cultivation with a dozen Kolam houses. It is the village of Onti Marudi where Telugu speaking Kolams from the plains of Surpur Taluq have

settled for the last forty years. Two tracks lead from this clearing: one over a narrow pass through dense forest to Dantanpalli, an old Kolami village with a shrine of Bhimana widely renowned throughout the country, and the other through a wooded valley, closed during the rains to wheeled traffic, to the large Gond village of Madura. There the valley opens into a wide basin surrounded by hill-ranges that rise abruptly some eight to nine hundred feet.

In the autumn, when the forest on the hill-slopes grows yellow, with here and there a patch of deep purple, and straw-coloured grass clothes the highest spurs, Madura, with its fields of young millet, bright green as a parrot's wing, and the grey-green crowns of the old tamarind trees, lies like an oasis in the paling landscape. Tree-lined streams, carrying water most of the year, wind through fields of fertile black cotton soil, and it is not surprising that for many generations this valley has harboured a prosperous Gond village. White flags fly gaily on high poles above the shrines of gods and the graves of ancestors, and watchers on field platforms rend the peace with cries and shouts as they scare the thieving birds. Between hedges starred with tiny white, sweet smelling blossoms we enter the village and find ourselves in narrow streets formed by houses that lie embedded in a mass of rank flowering beans, and the wattle-fences of courtyards.

To-day Madura consists of eight settlements. Five stand close together and form a unit which functions in ritual matters as one village; but three outlying hamlets have each their own village-deities and celebrate feasts and ceremonies as separate communities. The names of these settlements are Rajaguda, Chalpanguda ("Fort-wall hamlet"), Punaguda ("New hamlet"), Chintaguda ("Tamarind hamlet"), Pendurguda ("Hamlet of the Pendur people"), Kokaguda ("Koka tree hamlet") which are inhabited only by Gonds, Partsakiguda ("Hamlet of the Partsaki people") and Markaguda ("Mango hamlet") where there live Gonds as well as Pardhans. Tradition tells that when the Atram Rajas first arrived from Dorli and founded Madura, the valley was empty, but in the foothills Kolams of Pangri Madura lived and cultivated on the hill-sides. The Atram men built Rajaguda and later a mud fort, and as the population increased new hamlets sprang up near the original village.

Rajaguda is still the largest of the settlements and contains some twenty-five houses grouped round an open square in front of the house of Raja Atram Teling Rao, a substantial dwelling of ample size, but built in the usual style with mud-walls and grass roof. Before the raja's house, a light sun-shelter, its central pillar a carved marriage-post, shades a low mud-dais. It is here that men assemble to gossip and smoke, and the more formal gatherings for the settlement of disputes are held; here the villagers sit to watch the young people dance on fine evenings or gather to hear the Pardhans sing the great Gond epics. On the other

sides of the square stand the houses of the Raja's relations and relations-in-law. With front doors giving on to the piazza these houses have their fenced in courtyards, cattle sheds and garden plots at the back, and it is there that the women do much of the house work. But other houses in the village have a different arrangement a gate in a strong wattle fence leads from the street direct into a courtyard, and round this the

neatly is a group of small stones sacred to Auwai, the village Mother. This is the ritual centre of Madura, and here the Gonds of Rajaguda, Punaguda, Chalpanguda, Pendurguda and Partsakiguda gather to perform all rites concerning the whole community. Close to the tamarind tree stands a high flag-pole in the centre of a square of munda posts where the Raja performs the Dassera rites. A few yards away, near a banyan tree, lies a small, the idols of Hanuman and stand grass roofed shrines

most of them far more elaborate than the sanctuaries of the village deities. Near the Raja's house there is a substantial square shrine of Jangu Bai, its four corner-posts as well as the centre pole and floor are plastered with a special kind of white clay. The symbol of the goddess, an empty frame carved of wood, leans against the centre post and before the shrine flies a white flag on a white flag-staff. The priest of this shrine is of Atram clan, but in another field not far away stands a very similar shrine, also containing the sacred symbols of Jangu Bai, but owned and tended by the members of a family of Maravi clan.

A walk of less than a mile across fields and through a small strip of jungle on the banks of a stream, which flows through a deep bed of soft alluvial soil, brings tall mango trees.

was refounded on emigrated from J man of Atram clan, and for a long time only these two families lived at Markaguda. Three years ago they were joined by five other families from Govena, a village in the valley of the Moar River. The houses, which stand close together in a single group, are small and far less solidly built than most of the dwellings in the Raja's settlement. The reason for this difference is easily found while the Raja and most other men of Rajaguda have their own land, all but two of the inhabitants of Markaguda in bringir

ceeded

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who acts as village priest, but a Kolam of Pangri Madura, a Kolam village reported to be the oldest settlement in the whole valley. Only when the Kolam priest is prevented from acting does a son of the village-founder perform the customary rites. There is also a Hanuman stone in Markaguda, the remnant of some ancient, long-deserted settlement.

Close to the houses stands an open shelter where a Gond blacksmith practises his noisy art. It is hardly distinguishable from a cattle-shed, and no taboos seem to render its proximity to the houses irksome to either smith or villagers.

Markaguda too has a shrine far better in construction and upkeep than any of the dwelling houses; it is situated in a field just outside the village and is sacred to Bhimana, whose cult rests in the hands of the descendants of the village-founder. In the same field stands a recently deserted shrine of a Maravi clan-deity; the clan-priest's brother, who lives beyond the hills in Dhanora, has removed the ritual objects to his village.

All the six Gond settlements of Madura, the four that form one ritual unit, as well as Markaguda, Kokaguda and Chintaguda which have their own village deities, are inhabited by families of many different clans and phratries, and no correlation between the relationship of clans and the grouping of habitations can be discerned.<sup>1</sup>

About one mile distant from the main village of Madura, but still in the bed of the broad valley, lies a small group of Kolam houses, whose inhabitants used to live high up in the surrounding mountains; the recent inclusion of their old village-sites in the Reserved Forest has driven them from the hills and they now make a living by working for the Gonds of Madura. Other Kolams live in Pangri Madura, on the gentle slopes of the northern foothills separated from the open, cultivated land by a belt of forest. Until the reservation of forests forced these Kolams too to close in on the habitation and the land of the Gonds, they lived deeper in the jungle, close to the sanctuary of a famous Bhimana shrine.

Here as in other places the distinction between the Gond settlements in broad valleys and on high plateaux and Kolam settlements on spurs and hill-tops has of late been blurred and now both tribes dwell often on very similar sites; but on the hills surrounding Madura small groups of Kolams live still in their old style, evading as well as they can eviction from the reserved forests.

Travelling southwards from Madura, we cross a low saddle between two densely wooded ridges. High bamboos and the branches of tall

1. In Rajaguda there are besides the Raja of Atram clan and his clansmen, householders of Maravi, Mesram, Kursenga, Kurmetta, Pandera, Kumra, Kanaka and Partsaki clan. The distribution of clans in the other settlements is as follows:—Chalpanaguda—Atram, Arka and Kova; Punaguda—Atram, Kodapa, Venna, Torosam and Kova; Partsakiguda—Partsaki, Purka, Kurmetta, Arka, Soyam and Siram; Markaguda—Mesram, Maravi, Atram, Kotnaka and Chikram; Kokaguda—Atram, Arka and Siram; Chintaguda—Mesram, Kodapa, Kanaka and Kotnaka.



claimed by a Brahmin of Asifabad.

Outside the village lie the usual shrines of family and clan deities and in a field on a hill the shrine of Pord Pen ("sun-god") which faces east and contains a small plaque of a yellow alloy, showing in high relief the symbols of sun and moon. This is said to be the only shrine of Pord Pen in the District; kept until a few years ago in the Gond village of Jendaguda near Asifabad, it was brought to Garelapalli when the influx of more and more people of other castes prompted the priest and guardian of the sacred objects to move it to Garelapalli, in the greater safety of the hills.

Three miles over fairly level ground through forest and field brings us to Tilani, the old seat of the Maravi *mokashi*. There the ruins of a mud-fort, which contained his *gadi* or throne, and the old tamarinds in whose shade the bazaar was held, are still pointed out. But the glory of this ancient Gond village is gone, and to-day one passes through straight dusty streets lined by the houses of various Telugu castes. Some are fairly substantial, but the majority, the dwellings of low-caste families, are so inferior to the average Gond house that one wonders why these populations are generally considered more 'advanced' than the aboriginals. Five Gond families, living in a small quarter of their own, are all that remain of a once flourishing community. The wide plateau round Tilani, field upon field of rich cultivated land, belongs now almost entirely to Velma landlords from Telingana, and the Gonds have withdrawn to villages at the foot of the hills.

One of these villages is Irkapalli, once a hamlet of two or three homesteads, now grown into a settlement of some twenty houses. Nearby stands the shrine of the great Maravi clan-god, whose priest claims that even in the day of Tilani's greatness, the sacred objects were kept at Irkapalli, and not at the seat of the Maravi *mokashi*. A few furlongs from Irkapalli lies Chelmela, a very similar village, but if we continue to follow the valley southwards, we leave the cultivated area of the Tilani plateau and enter once more the forest. To the right lies Bugga and a little further on Mankapur, both villages belonging to a Velmā, who employed landless Gonds and Kolams to fell the forest and then settled them together with some families of Telugu peasants as his tenants on the newly cleared land.

From Mankapur the track rises through high forest into a wide cauldron, carpeted with undulating fields and ringed about with precipitous slopes of sparsely wooded ridges. By spreading tamarind trees, that testify to ancient habitation, stand the three settlements of Rom-palli. There is an atmosphere of cosiness and well-being about this village, and the fertile lands within its horse-shoe barrier of mountains seem predestined as the home of a self-contained and contented

1. Both the *gadi* and the bazaar of Tilani figure prominently in the legends of the Maravi clan.

community.<sup>1</sup> For many generations Rompalli has been the seat of a  
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 nbers

of the *mokashis* and the clan priest's family. Another set of monuments tallies the *mokashi* who ruled over Rompalli during recent generations in the shade of a tamarind tree at the entrance of the village each generation of *mokashi* erects a large *munda* post in honour of Karwar Maisama the Guardian of the Gate. When a new post is set up, a buffalo is sacrificed, and the old post uprooted and leant against the trunk of the tamarind.

Rompalli has for long been a large village, but its population experienced a further increase when twelve years ago a group of families from the plains of Lakshetipet Taluq sought refuge in the hills after losing their land to a Velma. To-day the village comprises forty seven houses of Gonds twenty houses of Pardhans seven houses of Kolams, eight houses of Naikpods and three houses of Madigas. Formerly the Kolams and Naikpods lived in small hamlets in the surrounding mountains, but when the forest laws forced them to abandon these settlements and their cultivation on hill slopes, they drifted down into the valley.

Some five miles south west of Rompalli the highlands fall sheer a thousand feet into the plains of the Godavari valley, and so let us turn north west and take the path along the hill slopes where bare patches of ruddy soil sometimes ranging to an astonishing lilac colour, alternate with dry bamboos and the fading gold of light deciduous forest. But it is only on these wind swept heights that the forest has lost its freshness. Abruptly one drops into depressions where moisture is long preserved, and trees and shrubs are clothed in deep green foliage. In such a sheltered hollow has the village of Bhimpur been recently carved from the forest. The stools of felled trees force a tortuous course upon the ploughman, while here and there mango or *jamun*<sup>2</sup> trees have been spared for the sake of their fruits. All around the clearing rises high, straight boled and luxuriant forest, very much in contrast to the shrubby jungle round old villages where felling for domestic use and excessive  
 e houses

Velma,  
 is a cup at the centre of the clearing but sheds and pens for cattle are built at some distance on a rising slope.

Emerging from the dense forests round Bhimpur where many a Gond is said to have fallen victim to tigers, we climb the long and stony

1 How great is the seclusion of these villages in the hills even to-day may be judged from the fact that when I visited Rompalli in November 1942, I was told that no gazetted officer of any department had ever been to the area, while human memory not even a Tahsildar or Sub-inspector of Police had visited Rompalli.

2 *Eugenia jambolana*.



heights and reach at last a ridge of magnificent vistas. Eastwards range succeeds range, and the clearings and valleys where Gonds have their homesteads and fields are lost among the forest clad hills. For several miles the track, strewn with stones and only just passable for carts, traverses the broken ground of a high plateau, and then it descends into a shallow bowl in which lies the village of Mangi.

Circled like Rompalli by rising hills, Mangi village lies, however, on poorer soil and makes a far less prosperous impression. Since time immemorial it has been the home and ritual centre of the Rai Siram clan, and the village headman of Mangi and guardian of the clan-god stood in his capacity as *poi-patel* on a level with *mokashi*.

The hill range stretching north-west from Mangi is now a wilderness. Grass and shrub have grown over the old tracks, which can no longer be used by carts, and even on foot or on horseback it is difficult to forge a way through the prickly thicket of spear-grass, often ten feet high. But before the forest-policy of the last decades denuded these heights of their inhabitants, several Gond and Kolam villages lay on the way between Mangi and the more populated plateaux of Utnur Taluq. Pairagarh, a lofty site overlooking the *ghat* where Gonds and Kolams used to live, and the many scattered Gond hamlets on the sloping ground of Deganguta, as well as numerous Kolam settlements, have all been disbanded, and to-day the first human settlement we reach is Jamuldhara, eleven miles as the crow flies north-west of Mangi, but a good sixteen miles on the winding jungle-paths.

It is through a labyrinth of small narrow valleys, thick with bamboo jungle, and over paths invisible under a swaying sea of spear-grass that we approach Jamuldhara. A draw-well with a tall beam and a trough for watering cattle in a shady dell signals the proximity of a village, and passing a solitary Kolam homestead and crossing the rocky bed of a stream we reach the Gond settlement. There are only seven houses, situated on a round hillock from which the fields slope down on three sides to the tree-lined stream. On the fields close to their houses the villagers grow maize, cucumbers and marrows during the rains, and later plant out chillies, egg-plants and tobacco in well ordered lines; but for their main food crops they rely on more distant fields. The Gond village of Jamuldhara was founded by the present headman Kursenga Buchi an old man born in Marlavai who came many years ago to this out of the way place, till then only the home of a few Kolams. Even to-day the village-deities are still propitiated by a Kolam priest whose association with the locality is older than that of any of the Gond villagers.

The founder and *patel* of the village lives generally not in Jamuldhara but in Yellapatar a village some two miles distant, perched on the highest point of a ridge. This too was a Kolam settlement, and Gonds came later with Kursenga Buchi, who, acquiring land there as

well as in Jamuldhara, has ever since acted as *patel* for both villages. While the Gonds have their fields on the top of the ridge and on the gentle slopes the Kolams living in various outlying hamlets practise, surreptitiously, hoe cultivation on the steeper hill sides, and eke out a occasional field labour for their Gond. is a small village of only five Gond id is under the same headman as

Jamuldhara it is in ritual matters an independent unit. The setting of both Yellapatar and Jamuldhara in the landscape is very different from those of most villages in the Tilani hills. Whereas there the settlements and fields lie on more or less level ground surrounded by hills we find here the houses built on ridges and spurs and the fields of Gonds scattered over the slopes and valleys below, wherever a piece of level soil allows of plough cultivation.

Has the rugged country of hills and narrow valleys round Jamuldhara been for long the home of Gonds or was it only the flooding of the lowlands by immigrant populations which compelled the Gonds to push their settlements right into the least accessible hill-tracts? Yellapatar was newly founded it is true some forty years ago by the present headman but Jamuldhara though then deserted, has the tradition of old occupation by Gonds. Even more significant is the existence of an important cult centre at a distance of less than two miles from Jamuldhara. There lies the sanctuary of a mother goddess known as Motagudem or Kanapalli Auwal to which Gonds from a circuit of well over twenty miles bring their seed grain and solicit the favour of the goddess with sacrifices of goats and chickens. Motagudem a nearby village site was for many generations the seat of a *poi* *patel* of Kanaka clan and Kanaka men still function as priests of the Motagudem Auwal. But for the last twenty years both Motagudem and Kanapalli, another village in the vicinity have been deserted, and the Kanaka clan deity associated with Motagudem has after long wanderings temporarily come to rest in distant Marlavai. Thus there remains no doubt that even in olden times when Gonds had the choice of many different lands, some of their villages lay in the very heart of the wildest hills.

Travelling westwards from Yellapatar through country broken by many ravines where streams flow in rocky beds and thick bamboo jungle alternates with shady forest and stretches of grass high enough to swallow horse and rider we climb at last a steep slope and come suddenly upon a very different landscape. Here we are on the crown of the Utnur Plateau. Rolling hills fringe broad level valleys patterned by cultivation and blocks of light forest. If a road from the hillsides, or the level

Netnur, the first village of this group, is spread over a rounded mound, its twenty Gond homesteads scattered in loose groups of three or four between fields and patches of waste land. There is no recognizable centre or village-square, and such trees as there are seem to stand too far from the houses to favour social gatherings in the shade of their branches. The whole layout of Netnur rings a note of haphazardness and although each individual homestead is spaciouly arranged, the village as a whole lacks the homely atmosphere that pervades so many Gond villages. Yet it is an old village, with inhabitants linked by close kinship ties to the people of the neighbourhood.

Two miles over easy open country brings us to Pamelavara, a village of six houses standing in a single group on the top of a small ridge. Only four years ago there were forty households at Pamelavara, but the devastations of man-eating tigers, which within a short time killed five of the villagers, caused a stampede, and all but five families fled to safer localities.

Within sight of Pamelavara, where the shoulder of a hill curves elegantly down to the massive dome of a huge banyan tree, lies the once important village of Sirpur, which in local usage still lends the whole area the name of Sirpur *patti*. The ruins of an old fort constructed of hewn stone with a superstructure of brick tell of the Gond Rajas of Atram clan whose descendants possess still the original *sanad*-documents granted by the Emperor Aurangzeb. Divested of their power, the Raja family became impoverished and, though within the memory of old men a village of more than hundred houses, Sirpur was abandoned and only refounded recently by ten Gonds from the nearby village of Dhanora. Their houses cling to the curving slope, while several Maratha and Madiga families have settled on the lower ground close to the banyan-tree and fort.

Here we are almost exactly in the centre of some twenty Gond villages, the farthest not more than five miles from Sirpur, all set in similar surroundings. In the north-east lies Pangri, residence of Jangu Babu, a member of another line of Atram Rajas and an important though somewhat controversial figure in the country. Pangri consists to-day of four settlements, two lying at the foot of the hills (Fig. 7) and two at a short distance amidst level, cultivated land; while a little way away dwell hoe-cultivating Kolams. On a wooded peak not far from Pangri, but even nearer to the hamlet of Sitagondi, is the sanctuary of the greatest of all the Atram clan-gods to which no outsider may ever ascend. Indeed, a small cave at Sitagondi is believed by local Gonds to be the cave where in the past the divine ancestors of all the Gonds were imprisoned at Mahadeo's command.

Pulera, a village of three settlements populated by Gonds and Pardhans, and favoured with a grove of palmrya palms, Daboli, the home of both Gonds and a few families of Khatis and Pardhans, and

Rasimetta a village of more than forty houses closely grouped together in streets and squares all lie on slightly sloping ground at the foot of hillocks with some of their cattle sheds and pens built against the hill-side. Thus situated are also Busumetta to the north and in the south Polesar, Pitaguda Marlavai and Chudur Koinur, a village illogically called 'little Koinur' though it comprises nearly fifty houses, while Persa Koinur (great Koinur) is now a hamlet of only six households. Gumnur and Botijala still suffering from the tiger scare of four years ago have only a few houses but Dhanora is a prosperous and crowded village with a large village square.

On the southern edge of this highland the situation of the villages is slightly different. Kanchanpalli the ancient residence of a branch of the Atram Raja family but now a settlement of a mere dozen houses, is sheltered by hills on two sides and so snugly set between fields that at the end of the rains only the roofs, yellow with the flowers of climbing gourds emerge from the wreath of rustling millet and maize. Not many years ago the village stood on a site more worthy of a Gond chief's habitation. As one walks from the present settlement across fields of flowering oil seed and round the shoulder of a hill a panorama ranging from the forest clad mountains of Mangi across the plains to the distant hills of Karunnagar unfolds magnificently. Here, overlooking the deep valley, where the Godavari shining like a silver belt on a girl's blue sari flows through the fertile land of Telingana, stood the old village of Kanchanpalli.

High above on a flat ridge well over 2 000 feet above sea level was situated the Gond village of Phirangpatar. In spite of scarcity of water which throughout the hot weather forced the inhabitants to make daily treks to the well of Kanchanpalli Gonds and Kolams clung to this elevated site where they cultivated their beloved light soils until its inclusion in the Reserved Forest left them no other choice but to move to other villages. Close to the old site of Phirangpatar the plateau falls more than a thousand feet and from the top of the cliff one looks straight down on the ten houses of Islampur (Fig 8) arranged in one orderly group in the centre of an oval clearing, where fields in varying stages of cultivation appear like so many squares of green yellow and brown. The forest enclosing the village land extends over the foot hills right up to the riverain plains where Telugu peasants have their substantial villages. Few Gonds live to day in this vast forest area but the traces of old sites make it probable that it was once broken by more clearings like Islampur and peopled by Gonds Kolams and Naikpods.

Now covered by grass and scattered over with stunted teak, the ridge that once bore Phirangpatar extends north and west and curving round in a great horse shoe encloses the pleasant valley of Seti Harap-nur. From the south one overlooks an oval basin and here fields range

to both sides of a shrub-lined brook and small groups of houses are dotted along the foot of the hill-slopes (Fig. 33). The only settlement in the midst of the valley is a hamlet of six Madiga houses, which stand close to the stream. At the head of the valley is a Gond hamlet of ten houses,<sup>1</sup> three furlongs away, hidden by an obtruding shoulder, lies the homestead of two Kolam families and at approximately the same distance but built against the opposite slope are three Gond houses.<sup>2</sup> From there it is less than a furlong to the largest settlement of Seti Harapnūr, where fourteen houses including that of the headman, are ranged along the gentle slope.<sup>3</sup> Separated from this main settlement by a small brooklet, lies a cluster of seven Pardhan houses. They are rather smaller than Gond houses and as most Pardhans are not engaged in independent cultivation, they have no subsidiary sheds for cattle, grain and agricultural implements. But some houses are neatly built, and on the white-washed walls of verandas some Pardhans have drawn an amusing motley of figures in red.

Not far from the Pardhan houses is a banyan tree sheltering the stone idols of Hanuman and Mahadeo, and behind it cattle-sheds and a large open pen cling to the side of the hill. Beyond are two more groups of Gond houses, one of four houses<sup>4</sup> and the last, a good three furlongs from the main village of two houses.<sup>5</sup>

There is no recognisable correlation between the grouping and position of houses in Seti Harapnūr and the clan-membership of the owners, and it seems indeed that the division of villages into small hamlets is not determined by isolationist tendencies of individual clans. It is rather near blood relations and families linked by ties of marriage that like to build their houses close together, and it is seldom that all families of one settlement or even one hamlet belong to one and the same clan. As a type of settlement the village split into scattered groups of houses is well established among the Gonds of Adilabad, and there is reason to believe that in times gone by when they were able to shift their fields to suit their pleasure from one part of the village-land to the other, such dispersed settlements were even more common than in these days of forest-laws and sanctioned village sites.

The people of Seti Harapnūr cultivate mainly on the floor of the valley, but some fields lie on the flat tops of the surrounding ridges; and a similar distribution of arable land prevails in many villages of this area. The light soils of the plateau yield excellent crops during the rains, such as millet and oil-seeds, but such land requires long periods of fallow

1. Of the householders 5 are of Atram, 2 of Here Kumra, 1 of Kanaka, 1 of Maravi and 1 of Kumra clan.

2. Of the householders 2 are of Atram and 1 of Kumra clan.

3. Of the householders 4 including the *patel* are of Atram, 2 of Pendur, 1 of Verma, 1 of Soyam, 1 of Verkerā and 1 of Chikram and, a little apart, 4 of Mandari clan.

4. Of the householders 1 is of Atram, 1 of Verma, 1 of Kodapa and 1 of Chikram clan.

5. Of the householders 1 is of Pendur and 1 of Jungnaka clan.

## THE RAJ GONDS

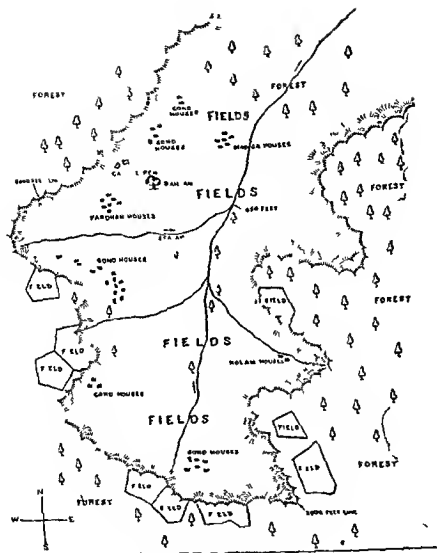


FIG VI Plan of Seti Harapnur

after two or three years of cultivation. Old men tell that in their father's time the Gonds of the uplands relied mainly on these hill fields and observing a circle of rapid rotation reaped such abundant harvests that they paid little attention to cold weather crops grown in the heavy black earth of the valleys.

Country similar to that round Sirpur extends towards the north and north-east and the various characteristics of landscape and settlement are typical also of the Manikgarh area of Rajura, but south

and east of a line drawn through Koinur, Marlavai and Gunjala, the highland, with hill-tops close to 2,000 feet and villages lying at an average level of 1,700 feet, drops to the open country of the Utnur tableland. Here the Gonds are no longer the predominant population and their settlements have ceased to express the impulses of their own culture. For immigrants of Maratha, Telugu and Banjara stock have acquired much of the land, and the Gonds have settled wherever ground was left to them and wherever they were allowed by their landlords. We may therefore close here our survey of Gond settlements and turn to the more detailed description of the setting and structure of a single village.

### *The Village of Marlavai.*

Marlavai, the scene of many feasts and ceremonies described in later chapters, was mentioned as early as 1654 A.D. in a *sanad* of Aurangzeb. It belonged then as it does now to a group of villages centred in Sirpur, which was the seat of a raja, a group which still forms a geographical and social unit locally known as the *pahar patti*, the "hill circle." Gonds of the *pahar patti* pride themselves that here the old ways of life and the old customs are firmly upheld, but to those of the lowlands it is a tract of difficult communications and vast jungles, far from bazaars and the helping hand of *sahukar*, and worst of all, menaced by man-eating tigers.

Set in the crook of the hills Marlavai lies between ridge and valley with the forest closing in on all sides of the cultivable land. The folds of the hill slopes, sweeping from the tableland into the flat bed of the valley, lend the landscape a pleasant irregularity, an atmosphere of intimacy during all seasons of the year. Though Marlavai is a settlement of ancient traditions, different generations have witnessed many changes in the village site. Indeed it seems that Marlavai, the now deserted Ragapur, less than a mile to the north-east, and perhaps even Pitaguda, a hamlet some furlongs from Ragapur, all situated within the compass of the same circle of hills, were but alternative village-sites and that the village-community cultivated the land up and down the whole valley.<sup>1</sup>

But the present generation knows of Marlavai's history little more than that two generations ago Kursenga Kosu refounded the village on a site which had long lain deserted. High forest then covered the village-land and only a group of Kolams lived on the surrounding hills, cultivating the steeper slopes with axe and hoe. Kursenga Kosu and his people, who came from Mahagaon near Netnur, some five miles to the east, felled the forest and cleared the land, and in those days there was no

1. The following description of Marlavai pictures the conditions in 1943; since then various changes have taken place, partly caused by the establishment of a Training Centre for Gond teachers and a village-school.

Forest Department to raise objections. It is believed that Kosu also placed the Hanuman stone and the Nandi under the big banyan tree on the village site but no one knows this for certain, nor whence he obtained these stone sculptures.<sup>1</sup> Kursenga Kosu also brought his Persa Pen to Marlavai and people from some twenty five households sons left Marlavai during his

and Buchu the younger founding the village of Yellapatar of which he is still *patel*. It is said that towards the end of his life Kosu went to live in Ragapur nevertheless he appears to have been cremated in Marlavai, for under a tree near the stream a wooden *munda* post still keeps alive his name. After his death the villagers of Marlavai dispersed, Buchu took the Kursenga Persa Pen to Yellapatar, and in a few years Ragapur and Pitaguda were also deserted.

But the jungle had little time to reclaim its lost acres for within four or five years Kanaka Sungo who had lived at the now deserted village of Pauargudem some four miles to the north reoccupied Marlavai and built his house not on the old site but beyond the stream on the other side of the valley. He was soon followed by other settlers several families of Kodapa clan came from Pulera a village six miles to the north east. Mesram Lachu still one of the wealthier men of Marlavai, came from Jainur, a village some two miles to the north, a family of nine mile of the det

Marlavai and Utnur and from Ioyagudam a village some six miles to the south west. As the village prospered more and more families gathered from other settlements, and Marlavai became again quite a large village.

At that time Ragapur was also refounded, but after some years to Marlavai and others settling

sons were little more than boys was at the same time his sister's

sons were little more than boys was at the same time his sister's Pangri but he established himself in Marlavai some years before Sungo's death. His energy and intelligence soon asserted itself and eventually he became *patel* and later Police *patel* of the four villages Marlavai Pitaguda Chudur, Koinur and Persa Koinur.


In the years following Sungo's death the villagers decided to shift the houses to a site not far from Ragapur, but after a few years they


1 Many Gond villages can see relics of Hanuman, carved Nandi and lingams, and when a new village is founded in h sculptures are sometimes moved there from a deserted site. But the Gonds do not know who originally made them.


2 Village head man recognized and remunerated by Government, whose duty it is to report births and deaths as well as crimes to the police.




# MARLAVA

 Dwelling House

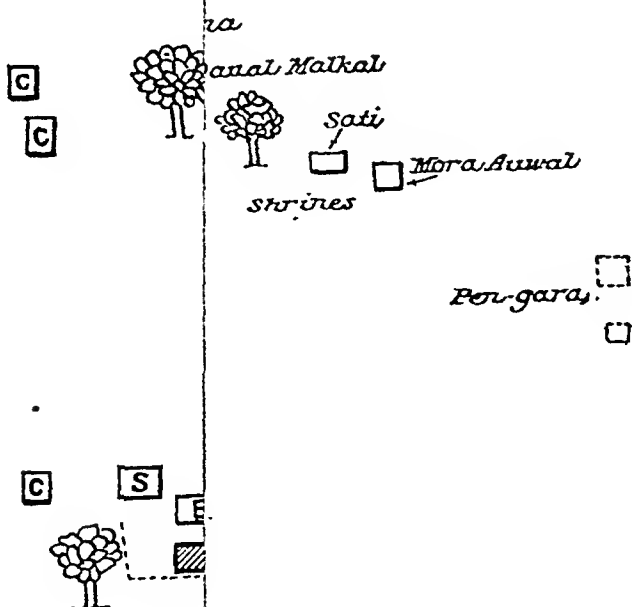
 Store House, at  
House

 Shed for Plough  
as Sitting

 Shed or open

 Mandap or Su

N



returned once more to the site of Sungo's settlement.

Then came the reservation of forests. A line was drawn round the village outside which no cultivation was allowed. This ended shifting cultivation, and the Kolams, who for many years had tilled the steeper slopes surrounding the valley of Marlavai, fled to Revaligudem in the wild, rugged country on the border of Utnur and Asifabad Taluqs, where for a time they were safe from the interference of the Forest Administration. In the economy of the Gonds too the reservation of forests wrought important changes. While the people of Marlavai had always cultivated the flat tops of the surrounding hills, where the light soils, when worked in rotation with ample periods of fallow, gave excellent rain crops, the inclusion of most of these hill fields in the forest reserve led them to rely more and more on the rich black cotton soil in the bed of the valley, which, often water-logged in the rains, yields good crops of white millet, cotton and wheat in the cold weather.

Some years ago Marlavai was shifted back to Kosu's site of two generations ago, and the people built their houses on the gentle slope below the large banyan tree with the Hanuman stone; and here it has remained ever since. (Figs. 34, 35).

When you stand in the shade of this huge banyan tree facing east with your back to the hills and to a short street of cattle-pens and sheds, the village lies before you bent over the shoulder of the hill which slopes down to the tree-lined stream. Almost in the middle of the village stand the houses of the *patel*, his nearest of kin and his dependents; the southern wing belongs chiefly to a kin-group centred in Kodapa Sonu, and the householders in the north wing are relations of Kanaka Kodu, the village priest or *devari*. It is a pleasant village, with here and there a mango or a mahua tree to cast shade even in the hot weather, and a beautiful view up the forest fringed valley to Pitaguda with its fifteen Gond and Kolam houses set amidst fields high up on a wooded slope.

In a field behind the cattle sheds, the wooden posts erected in honour of Aki, the Village-Guardian, stand with their stones in front of a small shrub and downhill from the banyan tree, and close to the houses lies the sanctuary of the Village-Mother, the Nat Auwal; a small thatched shrine under the gaunt branches of a decaying *Boswallia serrata* tree shelters the sacred stones, marked with vermilion, and the small clay horses dedicated in times of trouble to the Village Mother. Some five or six feet before it are two boulders beside which flies a small saffron-coloured flag on a slender bamboo pole.

Between the banyan tree and the Auwal shrine is the *chauri* or rest shed, where all non-aboriginal visitors and especially minor Government officials put up when camping in the village. Close by is a tall flag lately erected to commemorate the inauguration of the Marlavai bazaar.

Passing from the shade of the banyan tree down a narrow lane,

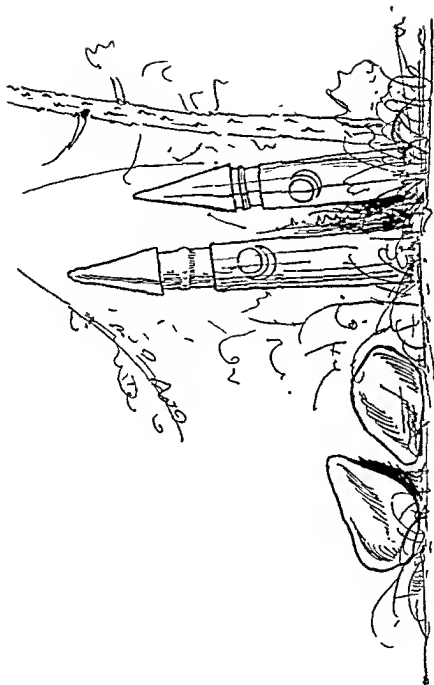


FIG. VII. The munda-potts and stones jarred to Ala Pen, the Village Guardian.

between a garden fence and the back-walls of houses, we come to a small square before the house of Atram Lachu, the *patel* of the village, where a sun-shelter (*mandop*) shades a mud dais. The massive carved central post with a small *munda* in front clearly characterizes this shelter as a marriage-booth, but its functions are manifold. Councils of elders assemble in its shade, and in the evenings when there is singing and dancing spectators sit on the low steps. The dance place before the *patel's* house is rather narrower than in most other villages, and Marlavai lacks indeed an adequate piazza for feasts and dances.

Lachu Patel's house is large and comfortable; round the corner, in a narrow passage between it and the house of his brother's daughter, firewood is stacked on low stands, and in the oft-wetted earth round the large flat stones used as stools when bathing several plants of broad-leaved taro flourish. At the end of this passage-way is the thatched oil press used by all the villagers and almost opposite the *patel's* back door, next to the house of his brother, stands the small shed where blacksmith and stone-mason work when they pay their annual visits to the village.

On the other side of the marriage-booth stands the house of Kanaka Kodu, Lachu Patel's young brother-in-law, who to all intents and purposes is still a member of the *patel's* household. Kodu's house faces not the marriage-booth, but another open space, where a shelter of *Boswellia serrata* posts was recently built for the rites connected with the Kanaka clan-god (Cf. pp. 260-267). It is under this spacious and high shelter that not only at the Persa Pen feasts but also during the Dandari time visitors and villagers dance and enact comic pantomimes.

Whereas Atram Lachu is the secular head-man, recognized by Government, Kanaka Kodu is the *devari* or village-priest, not because he has any special qualifications, but because his father Sungo founded the village. The temporary abandonment of the village-land after Kursenga Kosu's death broke the continuity of the ritual performances, and Sungo had to perform new foundation ceremonies. It is therefore his son's task to act at all rites for the propitiation of such village deities as Aki Pen and Auwal.

The houses of *patel* and *devari* form consequently the social centre of the village, and Kodu's house, though not particularly large, serves as a guest-house for Gond visitors from other villages who have no immediate relations in the village. Nearby lies a small boulder, enclosed by four stakes driven into the ground. It is the symbol of Podi Auwal, one of the village mother-goddesses. In the rains the irregular space before Kodu's house is, like every other corner of free ground within the village, sown with maize and vegetables and fenced in against the cattle. At this time of the year the houses are almost hidden amongst the tall stalks, but once the fruits are garnered it reverts for a full eight months of the year to the common use of the villagers as a place convenient for gatherings and dancing.

Uphill from Kodu's house runs a broad but short street. About it hangs an air of seclusion. It is almost like a village within a village, with fences barring both ends and gates let into the wattle walls that are closed every evening. On the left is the House of Kursenga Madu, the grandson of Kosu, he is a *bhaktal* or seer, and, as the only man in Marlavai capable of interpreting the voice of the gods, he plays a prominent rôle on all great occasions and in times of trouble is

Opposite Madus house is a shelter for his plough-bullocks with bundles of grass laid across the roof poles to afford protection from the sun and the worst violence of rainstorms. There are three more small houses on Madus side of the street, one now serves Madu as a storehouse, and in this he offers asylum to an old crippled widower, Geram Ramu, who curiously enough was once the richest man in Marlavai cultivating with ten ploughs and owning hundreds of cattle. The third house is occupied by Ara Lachu, who came some years ago from the Godavari valley and is married to the sister of Mesram Lachu, whose house lies a few yards from his with three others on the opposite side of the street. All the houses on that side are built with their backdoors and their small annexes for menstruating women towards the street, while their verandas give on to courtyards set off from the fields by bamboo stockades.

manua and pulse, and the men take *their bath on great flat stones* and in the evenings smoke their leaf-pipes. On a hot night one can hardly pass through this street, so crowded is it with men, women and children all sleeping in the open on cots and mats or heavy blankets.

The houses of Kanaka men and their relations stand at the northern end of the village in a tight cluster and . . .

From the deep shaft in-  
To both sides stretch fields of black cotton-soil, which in the rains grow  
so swampy that in hollows one often sinks one's feet. The well-grown

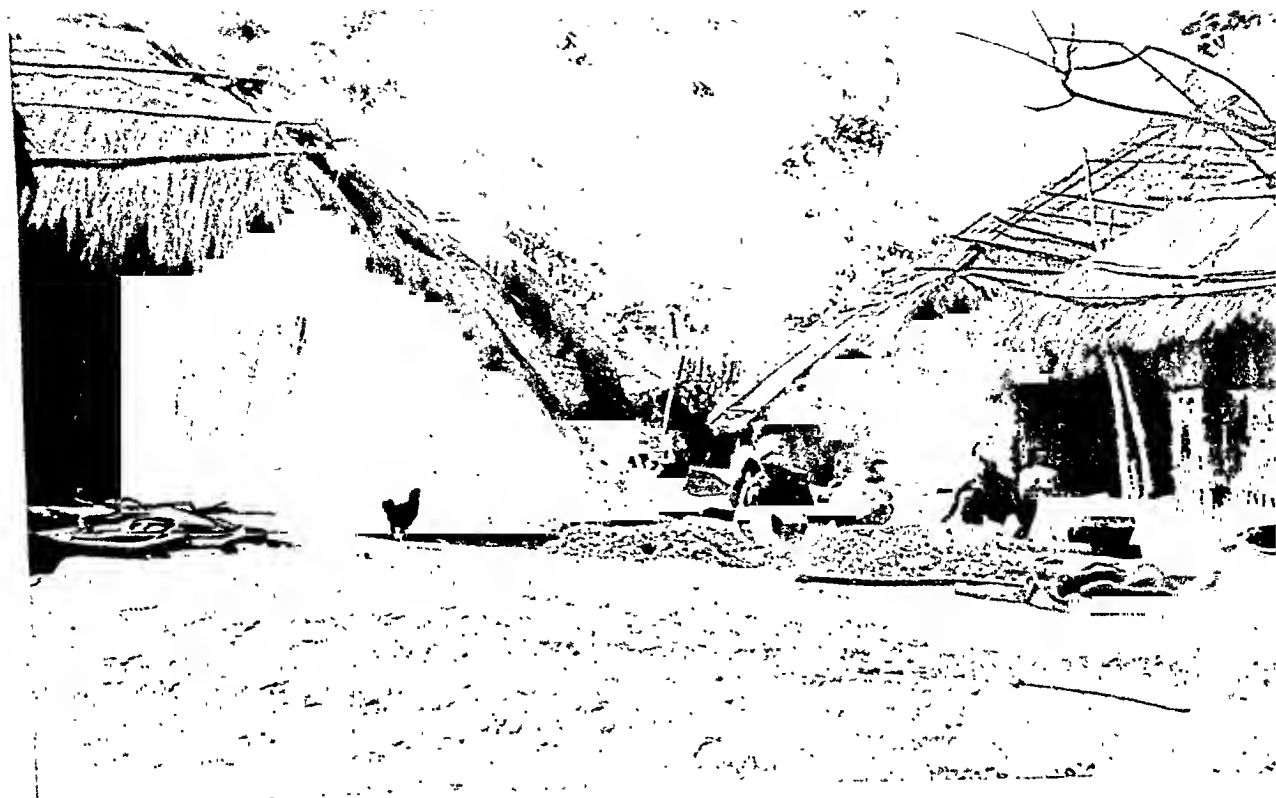


FIG. 35. A street in Marlavai.

FIG. 36. Grain-bins in Keslapur village.

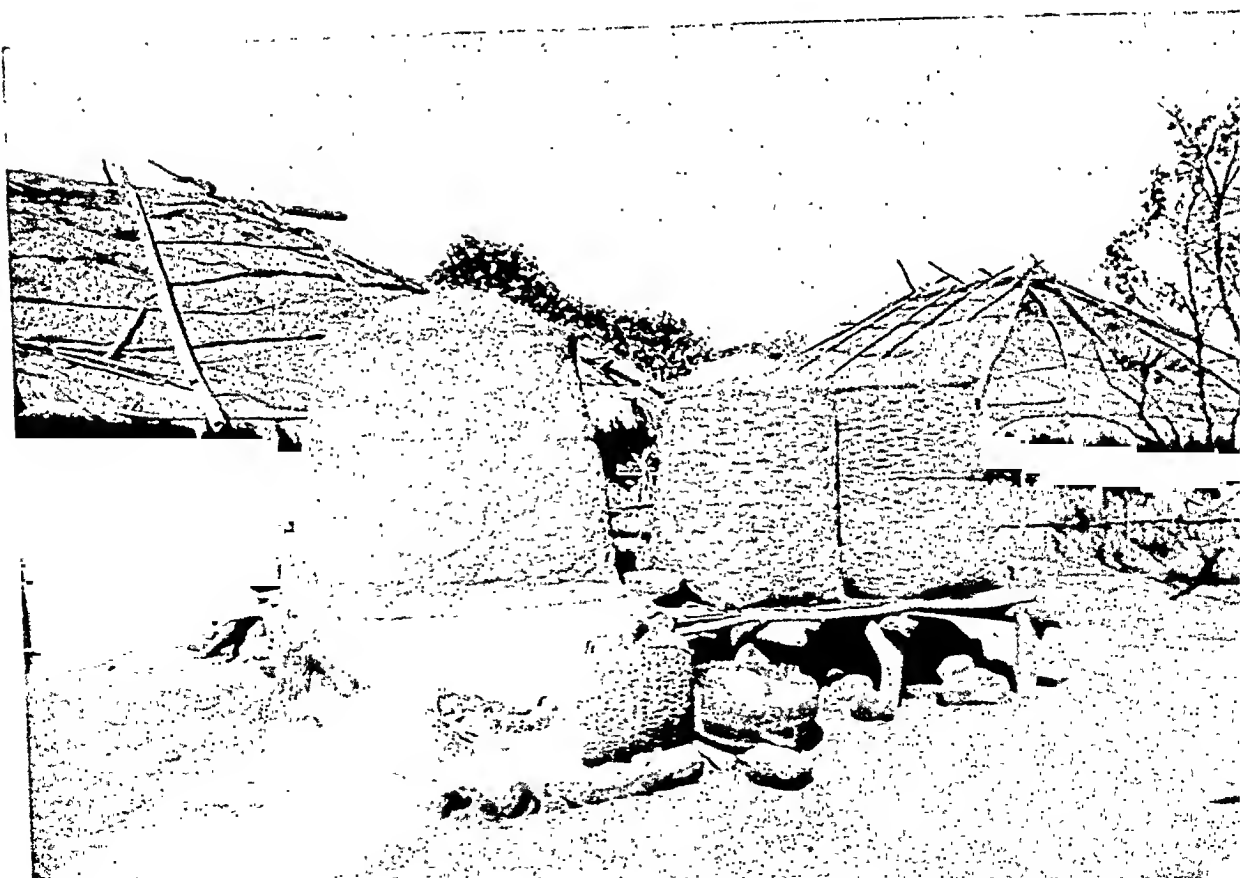
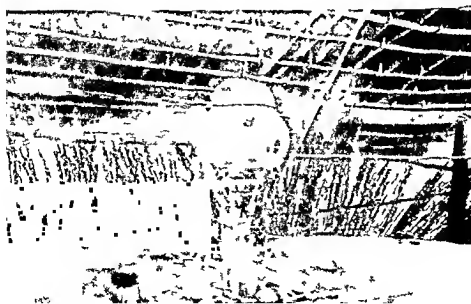




FIG. 1. The landscape near the river in Rempall.

FIG. 2. The landscape near the river in Rempall with a row of trees.



This well, though containing by far the best water, serves only half the village; the people of the south wing take water during the rains and the early part of the cold weather from the stream that winds through the valley bottom. During the drier months they use a draw-beam to raise water from a well dug in the stream-bed, and this also feeds a large wooden trough hollowed from a single tree-trunk, from which the cattle drinks.

The south wing of the village, dovetailing into the *patel's* quarter, stretches along the gentle slope towards the stream above the level of the black cotton soil and is dominated by a group of families of Kodapa clan. Headed by Kodapa Sonu, an old man who came with his father from Pulera in the time of the *patel* Kanaka Sungo, the Kodapa families constitute now a community which keeps very much to itself. Their houses are built on the pattern of separate homesteads: two or three living-houses, a storehouse and a shed for plough bullocks arranged round a courtyard and enclosed by a firm wattle-wall with a gate. Kodapa Sonu's homestead, protruding hornlike from the end of the wing stands surrounded by fields and is enclosed by a bamboo stockade overgrown with marrows, gourds and beans. To one side of the small courtyard is his dwelling house and opposite an open shed where he keeps agricultural instruments, tethers his plough-bullocks and places a cot or two when visitors come to his house; a little to one side, also giving on to the courtyard, is a house which Sonu built as a storehouse and which is used by his daughter and her young husband, who came from Daboli to join the household of his father-in-law. Adjoining Sonu's are the homesteads of his son and his brother's sons.

Even single houses have sometimes wattle-enclosures, but the design of a man's dwelling is a matter of personal taste and temperament. He may build it open to the public street with a wide veranda, or set it within its own courtyard surrounded by a fence, gaining thereby a certain measure of privacy. A glance at the sketch map will show, however, that the homestead rather than the isolated house is the most favoured. In contrast to plains villages there are no raised grain-bins in Marlavai, nor do hill Gonds like to store their grain in pits. The ordinary cultivator keeps his grain in his attic, filling it into large wattle baskets, mud-plastered against the rats; the more affluent set up separate storehouses, where sometimes young couples who still belong to the parent household make their home and where, in between the large grain bins, which stand on low piles, young stock may be snugly housed at night.

Most of the cattle sheds and pens lie outside the village in the midst of plots used for such crops as need regular manuring. Some sheds are built and thatched like houses, but many men keep their cattle throughout the year in open pens walled with bamboo stockading, high enough to afford protection from tigers.



## Houses

Dwelling houses from the large house of the *patel* to that of the poorest family conform closely to one pattern. They are rectangular buildings about twice as long as broad, with low thatched roofs, mud walls but no special orientation. They usually comprise kitchen, living room, a front veranda and a small annex at the back for women in their menstrual period and in the state of ritual uncleanness following childbirth. But sometimes there is no front veranda, and a separate shed is used as a place of gathering.

Many houses have a dais built up of stones and mud, to a height of two feet above the dust of summer and the mud of the rains but in others the cow dunged floor is scarcely raised. The roof is carried by two forked posts, spanned by a short ridge-pole, and these are joined by mortice and tenon, six or eight side posts support cross and long beams. The roof is constructed of slanting wood and bamboo rafters clamped between horizontal stays, the thatch is laid from eaves to ridge pole in overlapping layers and held in place by a light superstructure of lamboo. The eaves hang low and protrude two or three feet beyond the walls, thus protecting the house against rain and sun.

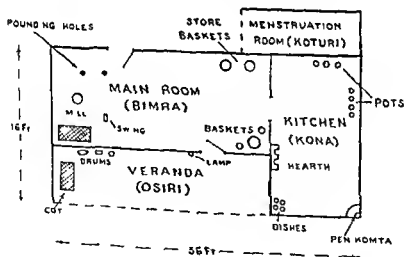


FIG VIII *House of Atram Lachu Patel of Marlavai*

The walls, built independently of the roof, are not structurally important and when the framework is complete, coarse wattle screens are lashed to the house-posts and plastered with mud and cow-dung on both sides together with the floor. With years of plastering the level of the floor rises and the walls take on an appearance of solidity, the joint between floor and wall being gradually evened out. Many houses have wooden door-frames and a few also wooden doors with peg-and-hole hinges and iron lock and chain, but more frequent are doors of stout closely woven wattle swinging on bamboo lashings.

The front veranda (*osiri*) runs along two-thirds of the house; well protected from the glare by the low eaves and yet open to every breeze, it is the men's favourite place of rest and work during the hot weather, but in the rains and the cold season it is closed in with bamboo matting and then it forms to all practical purposes an additional room, where the menfolk often warm themselves in the glow of a fire. A small door leads from the veranda into the main room (*bimra*) which is as long as the veranda, and has two doors, one giving on to the street or courtyard at the back, and the other opening into the kitchen. In this room, let into the floor, are the stone mortar-blocks

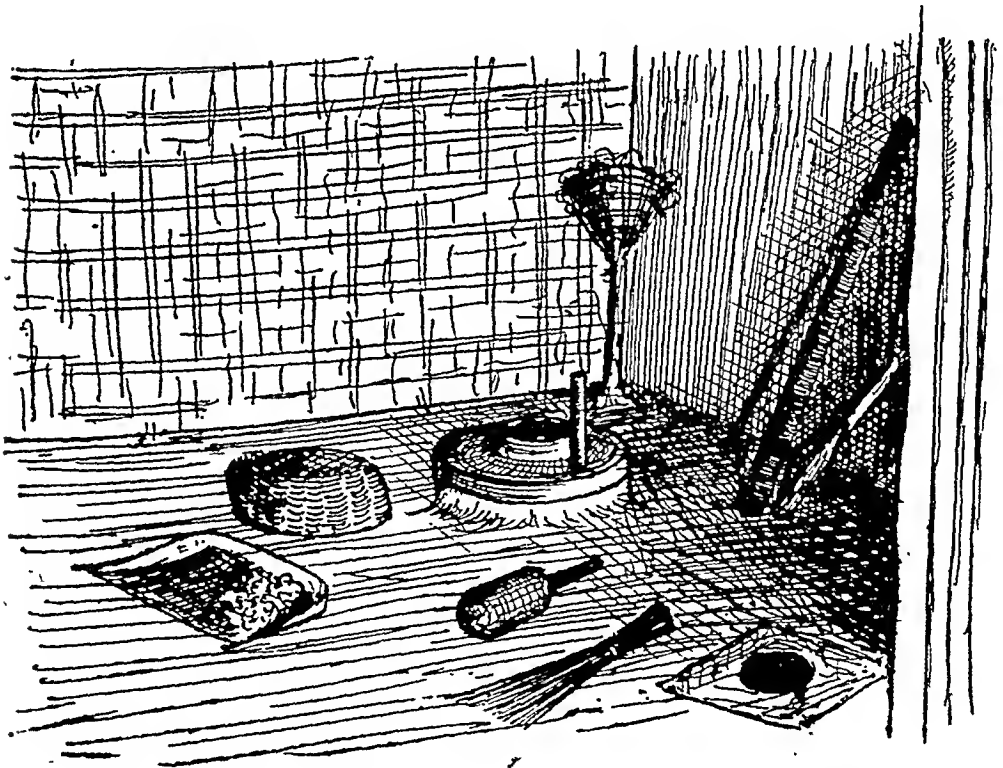


FIG. IX.—A corner in the main-room (*bimra*) of a Gond house, showing winnowing fan, basket, hand-mill, pestles and stone-mortar, broom, and nesting basket at the back.



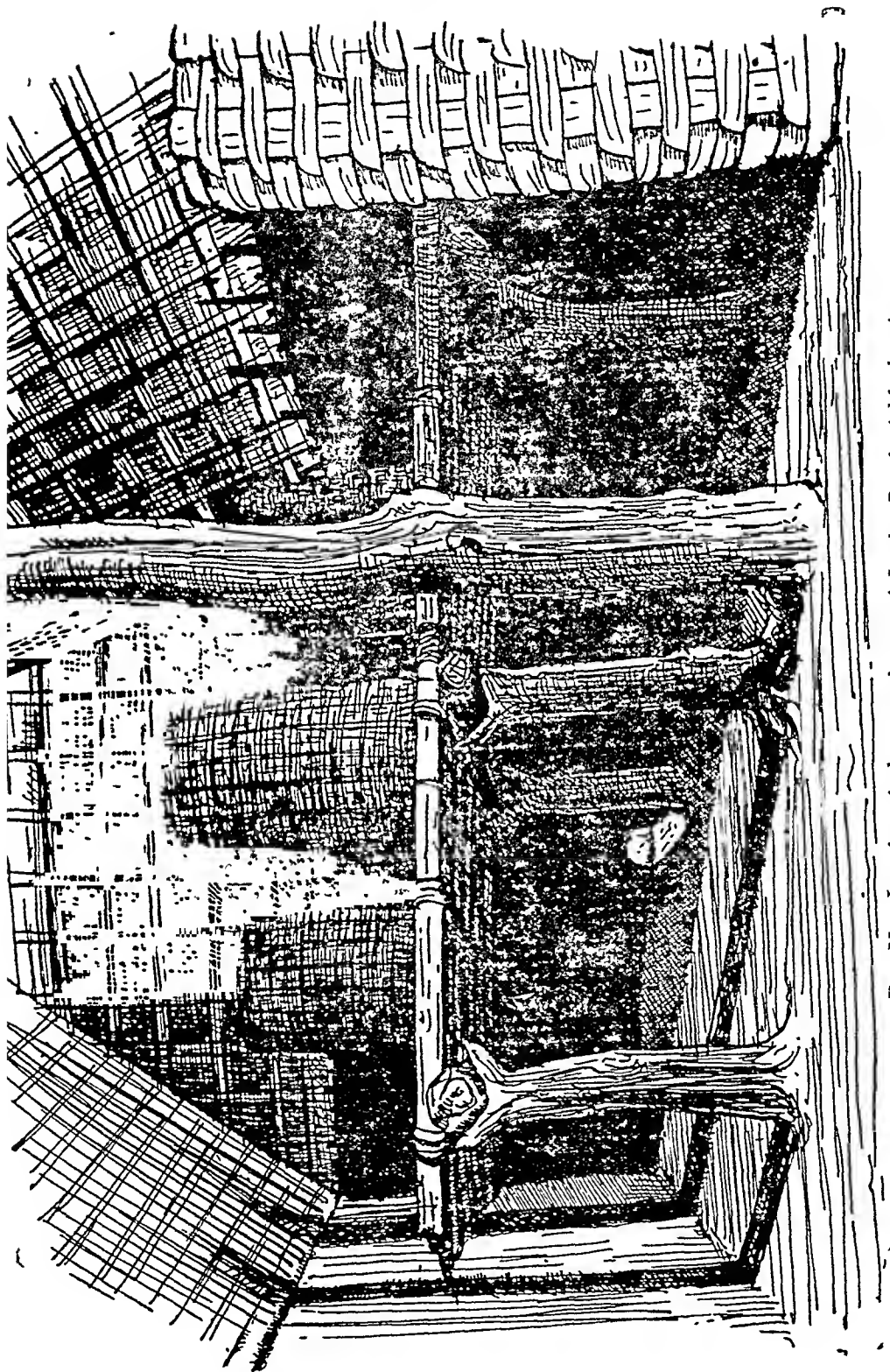


FIG. X. Interior of the store-house of Lachu Patel of Marlavai.



FIG. XI. *The house of Kanala Kodu of Marlarai.*

find a carved door and lintel. On the whole, however, the Gonds of the hills spend little thought or energy on decorating their houses; a clean, well-plastered floor and smooth walls, a roof that does not leak, and perhaps a wooden door that can be fastened with padlock and key being all they demand of a house.

In Marlavai all thirty-six houses stand together in a single settlement. True there is enough space between the individual groups of three and four for garden-plots and patches of Indian corn, but even in the hot weather when these plots are levelled, the fences down and the parched and dusty gardens become a common playground for children and young animals, the houses appear yet closely enough knit to give the impression of a continuous village.

In the fields to the north of the village near a large mahua tree lies a group of grass-thatched huts, the shrines of family deities worshipped by one or the other villager. Side by side stand two square huts with low pyramidal roofs, containing the peacock-feather symbols of Bhimana, Rajul Pen and Daul Malkal, and the iron rod of Isporal. At a little distance a larger but very similar shrine with a sun-shelter before it is devoted to Mora Auwal, the family goddess of Kanaka Moti, lately brought from Tejapur near Asifabad.

A rectangular shed with a gabled roof facing the two huts of Rajul and Bhimana once contained the ritual objects of a Kanaka clan-god that has since been taken to another village, and the empty shed is occasionally used to store baskets and grain bins. The removal of this clan-god was soon followed by the arrival of another Persa Pen of the Kanaka clan, and the latter's ritual objects are now kept in a newly built but similar shed, a short distance from the village (Fig. XIII).

Another hundred yards away in a field bordering on the forest lies the *pen-gara* or feast place of the Kanaka Persa Pen; the *Boswellia serrata* posts of the two shelters have all taken root and put forth fresh foliage.

In the rich level bed of the valley just below the village lie several tombs. One is still sheltered by a thatched roof, and a white flag on a high pole flies there in honour of the deceased. But it is only the tombs—or more precisely cenotaphs—of those cremated, that lie on the fringe of the village. The graves of those buried are in the jungle not all in one cemetery but dotted about within one or two furlongs of the village.

Apart from the shrines and idols in and about the village site, there are a number of sacred places in the surrounding fields and forests. On the rising ground to the west, where herd-boys often graze the cattle, is the inconspicuous sanctuary of Rajul Pen, marked by a stone slab under a small *dondera* tree, and there once a year, when the new seasons grass has sprouted, a sacrificial rite is held. In the bed of the valley, on the edge of the forest stands the *kor mara*, an old mahua tree, where after all

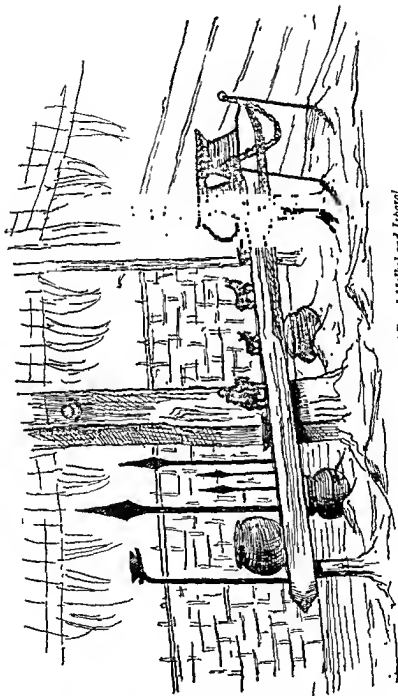


FIG. XII Interior of the shrine of Daul Melkal and Isporal.

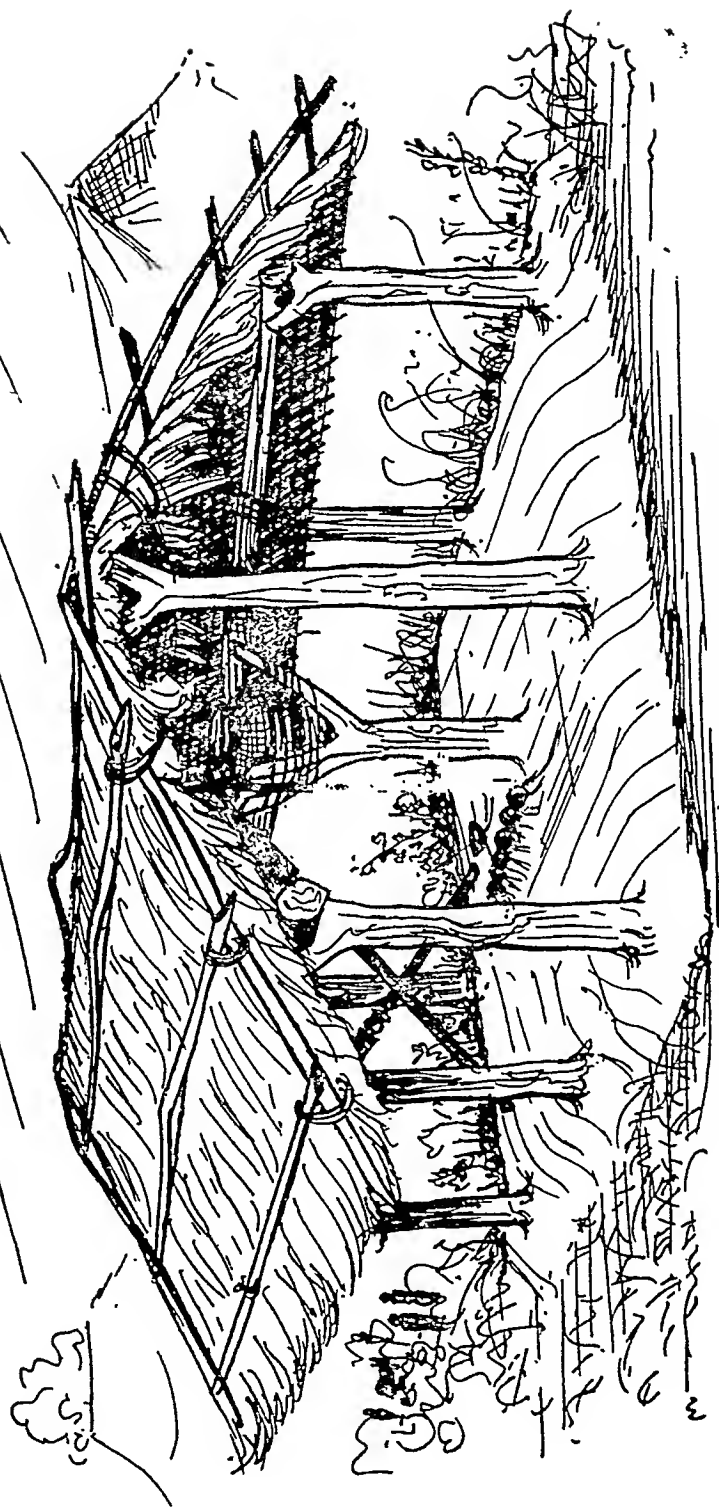


FIG. XIII. *The sati-shrine of the Kanaka Persa Pen in Marlavai.*



funerals, and on certain other occasions, offerings are given to the souls of the Departed. And across the stream on the path to Ragapur is a small shelter with two roughly carved figures representing Bhu Lachmi and Ma Lachmi the goddess of earth and the goddess of good fortune and wealth. A little way away stands a pointed wooden post, the symbol of Vagoba the tiger spirit, and a few fields further, where the path crosses a small brooklet, is the Siwa Auwal of Siwa Bori, the boundary deity. Here a dead tree stands as a landmark for the Raj Gond community.

Beyond lies the land of Ragapur, an ancient but now deserted village and though some men cultivate several of its best fields, these remain, for ceremonial purposes outside the village land of Marlavai.

PART II.

THE MYTHOLOGICAL AND RELIGIOUS FOUNDATIONS  
OF THE SOCIAL ORDER.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE MYTHICAL ORIGIN OF THE GONDS.

THE social norms regulating the tribal life of the Gonds are firmly rooted in mythology. They derive their validity from the rulings of culture-heroes and from the actions of deified ancestors recounted in epics and countless songs. The myths that tell of the origin of the Gond race and the establishment of the four phratries are more than history or folk-lore; they are the pragmatic sanction for institutions that determine the behaviour of every Gond towards his fellow-tribesmen, they are the vital force inspiring the performance of the great clan-feasts, and they define and authorize man's relations with the divine powers on whom his welfare depends. A relationship of mutual enlivenment links myths and ritual: as the myths lend significance and power to ritual acts, so the symbolic enactment of mythical occurrences during the cardinal rites of the clan-feasts endows the myths with reality.

A large part of the Gond's cultural heritage is contained in his myths. To him they are of never fading actuality: they sanction his own doings, they are quoted by his elders when expounding tribal custom, and in their dramatization his religious urges find expression and he feels himself one with untold generations of forefathers and with his divine ancestors. It is in the sacramental rites based on the clan-myth that the unity of his clan attains realization.

Without a knowledge of Gond mythology it would be difficult, if not impossible, to understand Gond society. So before we can proceed in our description of tribal life we must unroll the scroll of the mythological past and learn of those primeval events which are believed responsible for the main features of the existing social order.

All Gond tradition is oral and consequently subject to almost as many variations as there are narrators. Guardians of the sacred lore are not the Gonds themselves, but their hereditary bards, the Pardhans and Totis, who recite at each of the major annual feasts the appropriate myths or legends; it is largely the manner of recitation by a principal bard and his two assistants which must be held responsible for their successful transmission from father to son.

From a common stock of myths and traditions, Pardhan families of different clans and localities have evolved their own version of various episodes, and, while in part coinciding almost to the point of verbal identity, some of these versions differ, and indeed contradict each other in what may seem to us essential points. But considering that the bards

who preserve the myths by oral tradition live in widely separated villages with seldom an opportunity of listening to each other's recitals, it would be surprising if no such inconsistencies existed.

The present complex and elaborate form of most myths shows clearly the prolonged influence of a class of professional bards and story tellers and many alien traits and motifs have gradually been interwoven with old Gond tradition. Few Gonds are themselves capable of reciting a whole myth in the poetic form in which it is sung by Pardhans, but many are familiar enough with the one or other story to be able to relate it in prose and some men, and especially the priests of the clan gods, are so conversant with the songs of the Pardhans that they know if a line is wrong or an episode missing. When recording myths with a Pardhan informant I often noticed that the older Gonds present always knew exactly what theme and sometimes what words should follow.

Besides the myths dealing with the ancient history of Gond clans and the origin of the cult of clan deities there are myths which relate to other aspects of Gond life often containing motifs common to mythologies of Hindu castes. There can be little doubt that the Pardhans are responsible for the introduction of these motifs into the ritual life of the Gonds.

In outlining the mythical background of the social organisation,

it is often necessary to consider authentic. I have at times found it necessary to quote two or even three versions of the same episode. According to the clan of the narrator varying emphasis is laid on different passages in the myths and correlation is often difficult because all Pardhans assert that none among them is capable of rendering the sacred songs of any but his own clan deity.

### *The Birth of the Gond Gods*

On the great mountain Merugin the gods were born, three hundred gods were born and among them arose Papimiranjun Pen and spoke 'I am great, of all the three hundred gods I am the greatest. Then arose Niraniranjuo Pen and she too spoke 'I am great, among all the three hundred gods I am the greatest. Papimiranjun Pen raised his head one and a moment and he looked in front one greater than ' and her eye fell o

1 A comparison of these traditions with those of the Gonds of the Central Provinces, and particularly the myths incorporated in the famous *Raj Langra* epic, will be found in Book II.

they united. Niraniranjun conceived and in the palm of her hand came a swelling; one hour passed, two hours passed; when nine hours were full the loil burst and a girl sprang forth, a god-like girl called Kalikankali. Rapidly she grew up, and lived in the house of her grandfather the *guru*,<sup>1</sup> Nirankar Tapedari. Everyday she went to the sea to fetch water and everyday on her return Tapedari weighed her on a pair of golden scales against five *mugri* flowers.<sup>2</sup>

One day, the day of Durari, all the fifty-six crores of gods went to bathe in the sea, and Kalikankali going with her golden pitcher to the sea-shore also bathed and splashed about in the water. Then the gods looked at her and she looked at the gods, desire rose in her and from the god's glances she conceived. Her body felt hot and she left the water; she tied her precious *sari* of yellow silk, donned her silver-embroidered bodice and filling the golden pitcher, lifted it on her head. Nirankar Tapedari saw Kalikankali return and when she had set down her pitcher, he lifted her on to one pan of the scale and threw five *mugri* flowers into the other. And see, Kalikankali's pan sank; high in the air rose the *mugri* flowers. "Worthless girl!" shouted Tapedari, "your virtue is lost, and my life is ruined. Get out of my sight. Let me not see your face again. Go away, go far, far away."<sup>3</sup>

Weeping Kalikankali left her grandfather's house and wandered alone through the land. Nine months passed and when her time was upon her she was alone in the vast forest of Waiboan. To right and to left, wherever she looked, there was jungle, and no one to give her comfort. On the ground she sat down and at her back up sprang a *saj* tree<sup>4</sup> and before her and to either side trees of *dondera*, *kursi* and *lim*,<sup>5</sup> all trees which would later be useful to man. Leaning against the *saj* tree Kalikankali gave birth to gods, twelve threshing-floors of Gond gods,<sup>6</sup> thirty-three threshing floors of Telugu gods, thirty-two threshing-floors of Maratha gods.<sup>7</sup> When she had given birth to

1. The word *guru* occurs in many Gond myths in the sense of 'divine personage' rather than its original sense of "saintly teacher."

2. *Mugri* is a forest flower with fleshy white and purple petals and a sweet scent.

3. In another version Kalikankali's pregnancy and consequent exile was caused by her chewing *pan*-leaf, which the god Rushisarad had used to clean his teeth and which she found floating in a stream.

4. *Terminalia tomentosa*.

5. *Bauhinia racemosa*; *Grewia Rothii*; *Melia azadirachta*.

6. The expression "threshing-floor" is used to denote a large number, as many as can gather on a threshing floor. In this as in other myths the Gond gods are always referred to as Parenda Khara Koya Wasi Penk, but the Adilabad Gonds can give no explanation why the word *Khara* (threshing floor) is used so consistently in referring to the number of Gond, Telugu and Maratha gods. The association is evidently not only local, for it occurs also in Hislop's version, and R. V. Russell mentions that among the Gonds of the Central Provinces the tribal gods "are sometimes kept at a Deo-khulla, which is said to mean literally the threshing-floor of the gods, and is perhaps so called because the place of meeting of the worshippers is cleaned and plastered like a threshing-floor in the fields." (Op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 98, 99).

7. Another version of this myth runs as follows:

One day Kalikankali went to wash clothes in a stream near the temple Devarasgudi. Now at

all these gods she rose and the gods whimpered and whined like small mice. But Kalikankali left them to themselves, for her stomach was empty and she was hungry. "Where shall I go?" said she to herself, "Where can I find something to eat? I will go back to my grandfather."

Then Kahl But his heart v  
 "If you won't g  
 but still Taped  
 took a piece of glowing charcoal from the brazier and pushed it down her throat. Immediately Kalikankali burnt to ashes.

On the mountain Merugiri, at the nine-walled Dauragiri, Sri Shembu Mahadeo rose from his throne, saying: "I will journey through the lands of my earth, valley for valley I will see it." Then he made ready his white bull Nandi. "I too will see the world," said Girjal Parvati. "It is not for women to roam about, but who will stay the wish of a woman or the whim of a child?" So speaking Shembu mounted the Nandi and took Parvati behind him; they rode

wining, and whimpering of the forsaken Gond gods and following the sound found them under the saj tree, crawling about like lizards. Quickly she gathered them together and put them into the fold of her golden sari, then she returned to her husband and remounted the Nandi.

Back in Dauragiri Parvati suckled the Gond gods at her right breast and the left breast she gave to the Telugu and Maratha gods. Firm and sound remained the left breast, but her right breast shrivelled and the milk dried up and Shembu Pen looking at his wife wondered why she grew thinner and thinner; for he knew nothing of the gods whom all this time Parvati had kept hidden. At last Sri Shembu decided to consult his great book in which all is written that happens in the world, there he discovered that it was the Gond gods who were the cause of Girjal Parvati's sorry looks. "What a fool you

that temple four deities resided. Yad Raur and Ruk Dew, Jugat Raur and Somdevi, but they had all gone to the ocean to find food for the young Gond gods who lived in the stream. When Kalikankali raised her sari in the stream eight of the Gond gods were caught in it like fish in a net. Kalikankali, not knowing what manner of beings they were, put them in a fold of her sari and went home. Tapedari (here described as by Kalikankali) down Kalikankali her from his house, and at last exhaust the Gond gods he weighted the scale forgetfulness. At young Gond gods were left crying in the forest.

are," he said to Parvati, among "the gods whom you are hiding are Gond gods, they must not be fed with milk, but with solid food."

Then Sri Shembu himself prepared a meal: for the Gond gods he prepared rice, *dal*-curry, lentil-curry, ghee and tamarinds, but for the Telugu and Maratha gods he prepared only cooked maize and *dal*-curry. When the meal was ready he told the gods to go to the sea and wash and they sat down to eat. On the leaf plates of the Gond gods Shembu heaped rice and various curries, but to the Telugu and Maratha gods he served only maize and *dal*-curry. The Gond gods looked at the food and were pleased and each said to the other: "God Shembu has done us well, but now we need liquor." Sri Shembu overheard what the Gond gods said, and he caused the mahua tree to flower and as the flowers, blossoming, dropped to the ground, he gathered them and from them distilled liquor; this he set before the Gond gods. Lifting the cups they drank and soon all were merry and drunk; and in their drunkenness they cried: "This is all well and good, but one thing is still missing; we have no meat."

Sri Shembu heard their complaining, but he had no goats to slaughter; so he rubbed some dirt from his thigh, fashioned it into a squirrel, sprinkled it with life-water, and with the three fingers of one hand drew three stripes down its back.<sup>1</sup> Then he let loose the squirrel among the Gond gods, and *tāta tata* it ran off. "Look, there is meat," shouted the tipsy Gond gods, and leaving their plates heaped with food *tāta tāta* they rushed after the squirrel. *Tirk, tirk*, squeaked the squirrel and ran for its life; behind chased the Gond gods. Into the cave Sursuryadi jumped the squirrel and after it leapt the Gond gods, all the twelve threshing-floors of Gond gods tumbled into the cave. Behind, slowly followed Sri Shembu: "Die you foolish rascals," he cried in anger, "for full twelve years here you shall remain."

What then did the God Shembu? A boulder, as big as twelve bullocks he placed over the cave and there he planted a palmyra palm. Beside the cave he caused a banyan tree to grow and in its spreading branches he placed the bird Ranisurval to guard the entrance to the cave.

Then he returned to the feast, and he served the food prepared for the Gond gods, excellent tasting dishes made with milk and ghee, to the Telugu and Maratha gods, saying: "Take and eat! When after twelve years the Gond gods are freed, they shall eat cooked maize and *dal*-curry off leaves of teak, but never again such food as I served them."

### *The Liberation of the Gond Gods.*

In the myths of the imprisonment of the gods in the primeval cave

1. The grey Indian squirrel has three dark stripes running from head to tail.

the versions of all Pardhans agree in the essential elements, and even in the version recorded by Hislop from a Nagpur Pardhan, which contains on the whole far more Hindu traits than the myths current in Adilabad, it is a squirrel let out by Mahadeo that leads the Gond gods into the subterranean prison<sup>1</sup>. Of the subsequent events, resulting ultimately in the liberation of the Gond gods, who, though consistently described as Parenda Khara Koya Wası Penk, are really the ancestors of the Gonds there exist however, several versions. The two main figures in these liberation myths are the culture hero Pahandi Kupař Lingal and the goddess Jangu Bai but varying emphasis is laid on their respective roles, yet no Adilabad Pardhan will, like Hislop's informant, ignore altogether the role of Jangu Bai. There is a strong probability that these two divine personages belonged originally to different mythological cycles, which overlapping, resulted in the many legends that tell of their co-operation. The lack of clearness and consistency regarding their position towards each other in the various versions betrays an uncertainty on the part of the story teller characteristic of myths whose roots lie in several different spheres.

concentrating on the beliefs current among Pardhans and Gonds of Adilabad District we find a remarkable diversity of views regarding his origin nature and ultimate fate, and the only point on which most myths agree at least in broad outline, is his rôle in the liberation of the Gond gods and the establishment of Gond institutions.

The name Pahandi Kupař Lingal is to most Gonds void of any special meaning and they can give no other explanation than that it is the name of the mythical hero. But *pahandi* is also the name of a shrub with a red flower and since Hislop's version tells how Lingal was born of a *pahandi* flower, there can be no doubt that Pahandi is an epitheton ornans meaning 'red flower'.  
literally hair  
style of hair dr

*pahandi* tree. Many Pardhans say that Pahandi Kupař Lingal was born from the foam that rises over the waters of a whirlpool and that, being of divine origin, he had neither parents nor brethren.

<sup>1</sup> Op cit Part III p 5

2. Op cit Part III p 69 Hislop spells *pahand* but the Adilabad Gonds pronounce the word *pahand* with the two first syllables often so slurred that word sounds more like *pand*.



Lingal's parents Jalkadevmadsor and his queen Hiradevi lived at Poropatar Bijlipura. There Lingal was born with *ling* on his hands, *ling* on his feet, *ling* on his throat and *ling* on his head,<sup>1</sup> and when his mother saw his strange appearance, she refused to nurse him, and exposed him in the deep forest of Kuruwadip. There he was found by the sage Sonkhastar Guru, who discovered in his great book the prophecy that this child would attain great fame and perform great feats for the Gond gods, whose priest (*katora*) he was to be. So Sonkhastar Guru brought him up and taught him wisdom; when Lingal grew to manhood his teacher gave him a book, a bow and arrows, a gun and a guitar. Then he sent him to his parents at Bijlipura. There Lingal revealed his identity to his mother, who had in the meantime borne five other sons; his father Jalkardevmadsor too learnt of his return and handed over to him the rule of his kingdom.

Yet another story tells how Lingal sprang from an egg laid by the mythical vulture Mohami, an egg from which also Pando Raja, the father of the five Pandavas, was born.

Although there is no general agreement in regard to Pahandi Kubar Lingal's birth or origin, it is commonly believed that he was not a Gond, and that after establishing the social order of the Gonds he repaired to Telingana. But this does not seem to the Gond incompatible with his appearance in a myth recounting later events, nor does his description as a Lingayat seem inconsistent with his role as the sister's son of a Gond chief. There is the strong feeling that being of divine origin he never died, but entered in some unknown way the company of the immortal gods. At the rites of the Persa Pen, the clan deities, which he is believed to have instituted, the worshippers invoke him in the general prayers; and at certain sanctuaries of the goddess Jangu Bai iron spikes symbolize Pahandi Kubar Lingal and receive the same care and offerings as the idols of minor deities. But there are no shrines for Pahandi Kubar Lingal in Adilabad, nor is any special rite performed in his honour.

Jangu Bai, on the other hand, is at least outwardly, a far less problematic figure. She is a goddess and the term Raitar, reserved for a small number of prominent deities, is often attached to her name. Though the myths of her origin is known only to her special worshippers, all Gonds realize that she was never anything but a goddess, and her presence at Parandoli in the central highlands, her most important cult-centre, is common knowledge. Her exact relation to Pahandi Kubar Lingal and the degree of her assistance in the liberation of the Gond gods may be a subject of controversy; her essential nature is firmly established in Gond belief.

1. *Ling* is no doubt synonymous with *lingam*, the sacred phallus of Shiva; but the Gonds do not imagine Lingal as having a monstrous plurality of male organs, but think of the silver *lingam* worn by Lingayats on a necklace.

Pahandi Kupaṛ Lingal and Jangu Bai are not only the principal figures of the sacred myth, but form also the subject of countless songs; the following short *gumela* song puts the function of Pahandi Kupaṛ Lingal and Jangu Bai in a nutshell.

Who is the Gond god's priest? Who  
is their priest?  
Near a *pahandi* tree was he born, near  
a *pahandi* tree,  
He is Pahandi Kupaṛ Lingal, he is  
Pahandi Kupaṛ,  
The Pandwen folk's priest he is, the  
Sarpe Saga's priest  
In a silk cocoon was Jangu Bai born  
in a silk cocoon,  
The Sarpe folk's priestess she is, the  
Pandwen folk's priestess  
The Four brother folk's,  
The Five brother folk's,  
The Six brother folk's,  
The Seven brother folk's,  
We two will free the gods, we two  
together will free them,  
To Poropatar Dhanegaon we'll lead  
them, to Poropatar Dhanegaon  
From the cave they brought the gods  
from the cave,  
Gods of four *saga* they brought, gods  
of four *saga*,  
To Dhanegaon they guided them, to  
Dhanegaon,  
The way of this world they showed the  
gods, the way of this world

*Kaya penkenor bore bhupial ba?*  
*loya penkenor bhupial?*  
*Pahandi marataga puttor uar ba,*  
*Pahandi marataga puttore;*  
*War Pahandi Kupaṛ Lingal ba,*  
*uor Pahandi Kupaṛ,*  
*Pandwen sagator andur bhupial ba,*  
*Sarpe sagator bhupial*  
*Kosana putta bai Jangu Raitar kosana*  
*putta ba,*  
*Sarpe sagata bai bhupial ba Pandwen*  
*sagata,*  
*Nafan sagata ba,*  
*Siten sagata ba,*  
*Saruon sagata ba,*  
*Iequen sagata ba;*  
*Lair mire masi penkun ale ba lair mire*  
*masi*  
*Paropatar Dhanegaon ale ba Paro-*  
*patar Dhanegaon*  
*Yadital penkun teter ba yadital*  
*penkun*  
*Nalung sagata penkun ale ba nalung*  
*sagata penkun,*  
*Dhanegaon nende ale ba Dhanegaon*  
*rapo ba,*  
*Narput kalita sari nende ale ba, nar-*  
*put kalita ba*

The myth of Jangu Bai stands, in its full poetic form, at the end of this chapter, it is the version told by the Pardhans of the Sarpe Saga, her particular worshippers. The following story told by Manku,<sup>1</sup> a Pardhan of the Kanaka clan, on the other hand represents a more generally accepted view of the liberation of the Gond gods:

in the forest Rairukan; perhaps Pahandi Kupaṛ Lingal will find me when he goes hunting."

1. Kanaka Manku, one of the older and most knowledgeable Pardhans I have met, died unfortunately before I had the opportunity of recording his version in Gondi, the considerably different and far shorter version contained in Chapter V, was dictated by his younger brother Chitra.

One day Pahandi Kupaṅg Lingal went to see his gods' rice which he had broadcast on unploughed land in the swampy hollows; he found that much of the crop had been eaten. So he looked about and came on the track of two sambar. At once he set out, and following the spoor soon came up with the animals and shot one of the sambar with his gun; then he left the carcass in the forest and went to fetch his brothers to cut up the meat and carry it home. Walking through the forest, thick and dense on either side, his forehead brushed a *kosa*-silk cocoon; Lingal looked up and thought: "Never before have I seen such a thing; I will take it home with me." Carefully he took the cocoon from the branch and carried it home. There he put it into a covered pot and asked his mother to clean the house with cowdung. Then he called his brothers to go with him to the forest and bring in the sambar. But hardly had he left the house when the cover of the pot moved and a beautiful girl emerged. Hearing his mother's cry Lingal returned; he recognized the divine nature of the girl and sprinkled water before her and lit incense. Then he asked her whence she had come and for what reason.

"It is for you I have come," said Jangu Bai, "you are the priest of all the Gond gods, yet you know nothing of them. Where they are you know not, even their names you know not; but if you promise to give me one kin-group (*saga*) of Gond gods, then surely will I help you to find them."

"How can I give you a kin-group? If I give you one of the seven gods there will be only six, if I give you one of the six gods there will be only five, if I give you one of the four gods there will be only three."

"Do you care so little for your Gond gods? Go to the forest and search for them, and when you have found them, think of me, and I will lend you my help."

With these words Jangu Bai vanished, and Pahandi Kupaṅg Lingal, obeying her, took his guitar on his shoulder and went away into the forest to find his gods.

For many years he roamed the four quarters of the world, and whenever he rested, he played on his guitar the eighteen tunes, hoping that the Gond gods would hear. Thus journeying he wandered from west to east and north to south, but no trace of the Gond gods could he find. At last, growing tired, he approached Sri Shembu on the mountain Merugiri.

But Sri Shembu feigned ignorance of the fate of the Gond gods. To none of Lingal's questions gave the god an answer and Pahandi Kupaṅg Lingal, despairing, decided to end his life; he climbed a tree hanging low over Sri Shembu's great well, and head downwards hung from a branch by one toe, thinking: "If I cannot find my gods, it is better to suffer and then to die."

Then came Sri Shembu's elder wife, Girjal Parvati, to draw water, and when she saw Pahandi Kupa Lingal hanging head downwards over the well her heart softened, and she promised to show him the way to his Gond gods. Joyfully Pahandi Kupa Lingal climbed from the tree and followed Girjal Parvati to the palace. At the gate he waited for her and while he waited Sri Shembu's younger wife, Mandya Devi came out and asked him his errand. "I am in search of the Gond gods," replied Lingal, "for twelve years I have roamed the earth for twelve years I have sought the Gond gods, but no trace of them can I find." "Your gods I have seen," said Mandya Devi, "the Gond gods run along that path to the forest, but they never returned."

Immediately Pahandi Kupa Lingal set out. The path was narrow and stony and led through dense forest, when at last he reached a clearing he sat down to rest in the shade of a great banyan tree. Suddenly he felt wonderfully happy and taking his guitar, he played the eighteen tunes and suddenly there was a rumbling in the

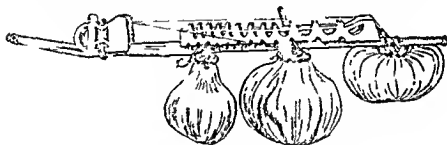


FIG XIV Guitar of the type played by Pahandi Kupa Lingal

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The tunes of our *Katora*! Full of new hope the Gond gods roused themselves, thin and yellow they were, shrunk and weak after twelve years of confinement and starvation, some sat up, some stood up, and some even danced to the joyous tunes, while others, still half asleep, swayed to the rhythm of Lingal's music.

And Pahandi Kupa Lingal rejoiced. He knew that at last he had found his Gond gods. But how to free them? How to bring them out of the cave? Then he remembered Jangu Bai and he called her name, begging her help. Hardly had her name passed his lips when Jangu Bai stood before him. "Why have you called me," she asked, "why have you thought of me?" "I have found my gods. My Gond

gods are in this cave over which the palmyra grows. How can I tear up this tree? How can I shift the stone-slab?"

Then Jangu Bai instructed Pahandi Kupa Lingal in all he should do: she told him of the giant bird Ranisurval whom Sri Shembu had posted to guard the cave, she showed him the bird's nest with its two nestlings in the branches of the tree under which he had rested, and she advised him to kill the small birds lest their shrieks betray his presence to their parents who were away searching for food. She bade him collect the resin of many trees and heat it in a cauldron. Over the fire the resin turned to glue and Lingal filled a large iron ladle, thinking to climb the tree and seal the nestlings' mouths with the sticky stuff.

But try as he would he could find no hold on the smooth bark of the tree. Then Jangu Bai leant against the tree, her face to the trunk and Pahandi Kupa Lingal, putting his feet first on her hips and then on her shoulders climbed up into the branches. But as he climbed the young birds saw him and uttered such terrific shrieks that the whole world trembled and darkness enveloped the earth. In great fear Lingal climbed down, but not as he had gone up on Jangu Bai's back; putting his feet on her breasts and then on her hips, he slid down between her and the tree, brushing against her stomach. Angrily Jangu Bai said: "You climbed up on my back as my brother, but in climbing down you touched me like a man. No longer can we remain within the same kin-group."

The Ranisurval birds, away searching for food, heard the shouts of their young and, each carrying an elephant in its beak, hastened home to the help of their brood. Catching sight of Pahandi Kupa Lingal at the foot of the tree, they fell upon him; but Jangu Bai seized them; with her right hand she grasped the wing of the bird Ranisurval and with the left hand the wing of his wife.

"Who are you to stop me" shrieked the male bird, "I am the servant of Sri Shembu Mahadeo, who set me here to guard the cave; no one may enter without his permission."

"What do I care?" replied Jangu Bai angrily, "I am neither daughter nor son to Shembu, and I fear neither his anger nor your wrath. I have come to set free the Gond gods and no one shall stay or deter me."

With these words she killed the two birds; then uprooted the palmyra palm and moved the great boulder, twelve times the size of a bull, from the entrance of the cave Sursuryadi. And out of the cave came the Gond gods, first the five-*wen* brothers, then the six-*wen* brothers, then the seven-*wen* brothers and last of all the four-*wen* brothers. Angry and famished after their long imprisonment the first thing they saw as they emerged from the cave was Pahandi Kupa Lingal and they would have fallen upon him and so satisfied their

hunger, had not Jangu Bai come between them<sup>1</sup>

When all the Gond gods had emerged from the cave Sursuryadi, Pahandi Kupaṛ Lingal led them away, for full twelve years they journeyed until at last they reached Poropatār Dhanegaon<sup>2</sup>. At the border Pahandi Kupaṛ Lingal left the Gond gods. Now that he had freed them, what to do with them? Still ravenous and unruly as they were, he feared that they would fall on him and so satisfy their hunger. So once more he went to Śrī Shembu: "For twelve

1 Another version of the liberation myth which I was told not by a Pardhan but by Kanaka Moti an old Gond contains several different motifs and has a more direct bearing on the cult of Jangu Bai in the Adilabad highlands.

In his search for the Gond gods Pahandi Kupaṛ Lingal went first to west, then south and at last east. There on a path he met Kalpurat Pē who stopped and asked Lingal where he was going so he told the god of his unsuccessful search for the Gond gods. "Alone how will you find your gods," said Kalpurat Pē. "If you search till you die you cannot find them alone. So go to the valley Bupat Kurwa, there you will meet Jangu Bai in a betel cocoon near the holy river."<sup>3</sup>

At last they arrived at the site where the Gond gods were imprisoned in the cave. Now Śrī Shembu had posted as guardian a Garur paṣk bird in a sandalwood tree to watch over the entrance of the cave and there the bird had a nest. Jangu Bai told Lingal to melt the resin he had collected and to stop the mouths of the birds by pouring the sticky stuff down the throats. Standing on the shoulders of Jangu Bai, who caused herself to grow to a great height, Pahandi Kupaṛ Lingal reached the nest and silenced the birds but on climbing down he put his feet on Jangu Bai's breasts and stepping down with his back to the tree brushed his stomach against hers. For this action, unbecoming of a brother, she reproached him severely complaining that such behaviour amounted to incest. From now on, she said he would have to avoid her presence (cf p. 150).

bird  
wing  
to be  
then  
me, I  
a qu.

at last and indeed then came Lingal's turn and with the first stroke he severed one of the enormous wings and with the second cut off the bird's head.

Then Pahandi Kupaṛ Lingal opened the cave and freed the Gond gods, and Jangu Bai reminded him of his promise to give her a kin-group for her worship. But Lingal began to make excuses, saying he knew not where to take such a group. In great anger Jangu Bai replied she would not rely on what Pahandi Kupaṛ Lingal might give her. "By my own will" said the goddess "will I get what I need my own kin-group will it be separate clans, separate lineage will be mine. Forty five villages round Patandoli shall be my seat, in a valley surrounded by twelve mountains and fourteen hills ranges my palace is ready with diamond beads and garlands of pearls there will I stay."

Then Jangu Bai returned to the forest.

<sup>2</sup> Poropatār Dhanegaon means literally "Dhanegaon on the uplands" *patār* being the stony high soil found on the high plateaus of the central highlands.

years you have kept the twelve threshing-floors of Gond gods shut up in the cave. Now tell me what I shall do with them." But Sri Shembu replied that he knew nothing about Gond gods, and sent Lingal to his assistant Satwin Barma, but Satwin Barma sent him to the god Nareda. Here too he found no help and Nareda advised him to seek the counsel of Bhart Raja, the father of Kalipursur Pen.

Pahandi Kupar Lingal met Bhart Raja travelling through the forest,—he and his wife were riding a horse while his old parents carried the luggage—and when after a little the party stopped to rest Bhart Raja ordered his mother to fetch water and cook food, and his father to cut grass for the horse, while he himself lifted his wife from the horse, placed her on a blanket and began massaging her legs.

Pahandi Kupar Lingal was shocked and disgusted. And he thought to himself: 'I am the *katora* of all the Gond gods, if I approach so foolish a man all my power will vanish.' He stood at a distance staring angrily at Bhart Raja.

"Come here, Lingal," called Bhart Raja, when he saw him watching from a distance.

"No I will not come near—for you are doing women's work, massaging a girl's legs."

"What fault is there in this? And why have you come here."

"For twelve years I have searched for my Gond gods, and now I have freed them, they want to devour me. Therefore I am in need of advice."

"What advice can I give,—I 'the massager of a woman's legs?' " replied Bhart Raja, "first go to the north and then come back."

So Pahandi Kupar Lingal went northwards, and after a while he came upon a cow which had just born a calf; but instead of suckling the new-born calf, the cow was drinking the calf's milk and the calf was licking the mother. Greatly amazed Pahandi Kupar Lingal returned to Bhart Raja, who sent him next to the west. There he came to a place where an old woman was emptying one pot into twenty-one pots, and there remained still water in the pot; then young girls emptied all their pots into the old woman's pot and yet could not fill it. Wondering Lingal returned to Bhart Raja who told him to go westwards. There Lingal found a colt grazing; but instead of eating the grass in the usual manner the colt picked the grass with his teeth and stuffed it into his rectum. At last Bhart Raja sent Lingal to the south and there he came to a place where huge mountains were suspended and swinging on ropes; terrified lest they fall on him and crush him, he returned to Bhart Raja and asked for an explanation of all these miracles.

"You blamed me for massaging a woman's feet," answered Bhart Raja, "but this I did to teach you that in this world a man's love for his wife is greatest, his love for his parents is less. In the east

you saw the cow and her calf, this is to show you that in this world children will teach their parents and parents drink their children's wisdom. In the west you saw the woman filling and emptying pots; this is to teach you that the love and care parents bestow on their children is inexhaustible, however many children there are; but all the children together are not willing to bestow as much care on their old parents. The cult you saw in the north is like the man who brags about telling great things, but summoned to the council of five denies everything, makes truth into lie and lie into truth; that is the way of the world. From the mountains in the south you shall learn: there will be kings in the world and will rule their countries by orders written on paper, and on these orders on thin paper will swing whole countries.

Thus Bhart Raja spoke to the gods and the gods were satisfied.

parents, but Lingal, doubtful what would happen, lagged a little behind. When the Gond gods saw the Raja coming they shouted: 'Pahandi Kupar Lingal has brought us food!' And they fell upon Bhart Raja and devoured him, they ate his wife and they ate his parents, and at last they ate his horse! They were quite mad; they would not listen to Pahandi Kupar Lingal, but shouted: "Now we will eat you!" Pahandi Kupar Lingal quickly drew a circle round himself. He sat down in the middle and played on his guitar; thus were the Gond gods charmed.

They became quiet and their spirits were calmed. Then Pahandi Kupar Lingal gave them the gods' rice which he had grown in the valley Son Kuruwa and said: "Go to the river, brothers, bathe in its waters, cook this rice and eat it. Your hunger will be satisfied."

### *The Crossing of the River*

So the Gond gods did as he told them. They went to the river and bathed, they crossed the stream and on the far bank lit fires and



began cooking their rice. The seven brothers, the six brothers and the five brothers all cooked their rice in water. Soon it was ready and they sat down and ate; and when they had eaten they went to Dhanegaon. But the four brothers cooked their rice in ghee and it took a long time. They went to fetch leaves and began making leaf-plates. Then came a rainstorm, from afar they saw it approaching; quickly they served out the rice, but alas! it was not yet tender; when they tasted it the grains were hard and half-cooked. The storm was upon them, and wondering what to do they looked about; they saw a white-ants heap, they poured the rice down its holes, wishing it should turn into white-ants.<sup>1</sup>

Then the four brothers turned to the river, and began crossing, but the flood waters rose and swept them away. In this calamity Puse the crocodile offered his help and the four brothers promised that if Puse carried them to safety they would look on the crocodile as their brother; in future ages neither they nor their descendants would kill him or eat him. So they sat on the crocodile's back and he began to swim across. But in midstream the crocodile, the treacherous crocodile, began to submerge thinking thus to drown the four brothers. In anger the Gond gods seized its tongue, tore the tongue from its mouth and again they were carried away on the current. Through the foaming waters came Dame, the tortoise, and he offered to carry the Gond gods to safety and in return they promised to look on him as their brother never to eat him or to kill him. But the tortoise was no better than the crocodile and nearing the shore he too tried to drown the four brothers sitting on his back. So catching hold of its head they twisted its neck, and seeing Chisti Koval the monkey on the shore shouted out to him for help. In all future ages they swore, they would call him younger brother, no house of his would they occupy, no wife of his would they marry, no field he had cultivated would they till.<sup>2</sup> Chisti Koval the monkey heard their cries and he took a long trailer of the *pivur* creeper and threw it into midstream. Then all four Gond gods took hold of the *pivur* creeper and hand over hand gained the river-bank.

In Poropatar Dhanegaon the seven brothers, six brothers and five brothers had been trying to build themselves houses. The seven brothers put up seven posts, the six brothers six posts and five brothers five posts, but none were successful, no house was straight. At last came the four brothers, and placing four posts in four corners, they soon had a house standing. Then the seven, six and five brothers begged the four brothers to teach them how to

1. When at the beginning of the rainy season the white-ants swarm and are collected and eaten by the Gonds, the people of four-brother clans salute them with folded hands, remembering the rice of their ancestors which was transformed into this delicious food.

2. All these privileges are still enjoyed by the Kova clan, the youngest of the four-brother clans.

build houses. But the four brothers refused. "You left us behind at the river," they complained, "why should we teach you to build houses?" "It is true," said the seven six and five brothers, "then we deserted you, but never again will we leave you, be it a marriage, be it a god's feast, be it a panchayat, always your word will we hear." Then the four brothers helped to build the houses of the other kin-groups, and ever after in councils of elders among the dead and the living, and before the gods the word of the four-brother clans was valid.

### *The Institution of the Persa Pen*

Now at last were all the Gond gods established at Poropatar Dhanegaon but Pahandi Kupaṅg Lingal was not satisfied. For the Gond gods had no kin groups (*saga*)<sup>1</sup> and no great gods (*persa pen*), and there was no order to regulate their worship. "If things stay as they are," said the brothers and sons, "all the Gond gods will be paternal, brothers and sons. What shall be done that there may be also maternal kinsmen and relations in Law?" Thus he decided to give them kin groups and great gods: one great god to be worshipped by each kin group. For this he needed bamboos. Now in those days bamboos grew only on the shores of the great ocean. But who to send for them? Pahandi Kupaṅg Lingal turned to the Gond gods and asked them to fetch bamboos but all refused. Then rose the youngest brother. "I will fetch the bamboos, how long I shall be away I know not, but while I am away take good care of our village, take good care of Dhanegaon."

For full twelve years the youngest brother wandered in search of bamboos. Under a banyan tree he was begging her husband to tell her a story. But the male bird, in no mood for story telling, curtly replied, "What is the use of telling a story to a woman!"

Perhaps he has a story to tell? When the Gond god awoke, the Gupachū bird greeted him and asked whence he had come, and the Gond god told of his long search for the bamboos. "You see, this is a sad story," said the she bird, "what shall we do to help him? For the bamboos grow in the middle of the ocean."

1. In later chapters these *saga* or *khums* are generally not described as kin groups but as phratries.

2. I have heard Pardihans relating this myth with Jangu Bai and not Pahandi Kupaṅg Lingal as the directing agent, but this version is rare and most Gonds and Pardihans agree that Jangu Bai did not accompany the Gonds to Dhanegaon and had nothing to do with the institution of clans and clan-deities.

forty-eight *kos*<sup>1</sup> from the nearest shore."

"I have promised my brothers these bamboos, and I cannot turn back; will you not help me?"

"If I help you, what gift will you give me?"

"I swear by Sri Shek<sup>2</sup> that I will give you whatever you may desire."

"Round your neck hangs a golden necklace; this give me and I will help you to get the bamboos."

At once the Gond god took off his necklace, and the female bird hung it round her neck and was greatly pleased.

Then the two Gulpachi birds brought a basket, in it they carried the Gond god through the air; covering six years' journey in barely four hours, they reached the sea-shore. There they set down the basket and explained: "The bamboos grow in the midst of the ocean; you must cut them as we pass. The god held ready his axe and away they flew over the ocean. To and fro swung the basket, far below danced the waves of the great ocean and the Gond god's heart was so filled with fear that when they came to the bamboos growing straight from the water and moving in the wind *krr-krr-krr*, he was too terrified to cut even a single stem.

On the opposite shore the birds came to rest. "What of the bamboos?" they asked; and the Gond god had to admit that he had been too frightened to cut even a single bamboo. "That is your fault," said the birds, "but on the way back we will fly very slowly. Be sure and cut at least a few from the clump."

Up into the air soared the Gulpachi birds, back over the ocean they flew and as they passed low by the clump the Gond god raised his axe and cut the bamboos. Back on the mainland, the Gulpachi birds bade farewell and the young Gond god well satisfied set out on his homeward journey carrying the bamboos over his shoulder. And as he walked the seeds of the bamboos fell to the ground and that is why now so many bamboos grow in the jungles.

When after another twelve years the youngest Gond God reached Dhanegaon, his brothers and Pahandi Kupa Lingal gave him a great welcome. They saw the bamboos and all rejoiced, and Lingal ordered the gods to cut the bamboos into shafts, one of seven nodes, one of six nodes, one of five nodes, and one of four nodes.<sup>3</sup>

When the shafts were ready Pahandi Kupa Lingal bade the Gond gods summon a Wajari, a brass-founder; he was to make four sets of brass-bells, one with seven, one with six, one with five and one

1. A *kos* is approximately two miles.

2. The god who carries the earth on his head; cf. p. 360.

3. It will be remembered that according to one myth Kalikankali was transformed into a cluster of bamboos near the sea; in another version of the above myth it is expressively stated that the bamboos used as shafts for the symbols of the Persa Pen were taken from the cluster of bamboos which was Kalikankali.

with four bells

"All is now ready," said Lingal, "what we still need are four whisks (*chauwur*),<sup>1</sup> in Bupaturuwa is a man who sells the tails of god's cows. These shall we use." From among the Gonds he bade one go to Bupat Kuruwa and bring four *chauwur*: two white and two black. And so it was done.

"Now we need cloth," said Pahandi Kupa Lingal; and he sent another Gond god to Son Kuruwa, to the sage Chan Guru, bidding him bring four pieces of cloth, two white and two red.

Then at Lingal's command, the Gond gods bound the *chauwur* to the bamboo shafts, the white ones to the shafts of the seven and four nodes, and the black ones to those of six and five nodes; to these they tied bells, to each as many bells as it had nodes, then round the shafts they wrapped cloth, white cloths to white *chauwur* and red cloths to black *chauwur*. When all was completed they built four leaf shelters and into each put one *chauwur*.

In front stood the Gond gods, all the Gond gods stood with folded hands and worshipped, saying "You are our Persa Penk," (i.e. great gods).<sup>2</sup> Then they spoke among themselves: "Now we have  
Pahandi Kupa

who kept burn-

Kupa Lingal and he took four iron spear-heads (*sale*) from the fire and told Lingal to give these to the four kin-groups of Gonds.<sup>3</sup>

With the four (*sale*) Pahandi Kupa Lingal returned to Dhane-gaon. He began dividing the Gond gods into four kin-groups (*saga*); as they stood up, he divided them, the seven brothers together, the six brothers together, the five brothers together and the four brothers together, and as the Gond gods stood up they turned from gods (*penk*) into men (*wenk*). Then to each group Lingal gave a *chauwur* and a *sale*, to the seven brother group he gave a white *chauwur* and a *sale*,<sup>4</sup> to the six-brother group a black *chauwur* and a *sale* to the five-brother group he gave a black *chauwur* and a *sale* and to the four-brother group he gave a white *chauwur* and a *sale*. Thus he gave to the Gonds their Persa Pen.

Pahandi Kupa Lingal instructed the Gonds, no longer gods but men, in their relationship to each other which were to be brothers,

1 *Chauwur* is a large whisk made of yak's hair resembling the ceremonial fly-whisks belonging to the insignia of rajahs and used in the cult of Hindu deities. (Cf p. 244)

2 While in Halp's version the first worship of the Persa Pen is described in all detail (Op. cit. pp. 46-52) the Pardhans of Adilabad mention it but briefly and reserve the detailed account of the Persa Pen rites for a later myth.

3 According to another and perhaps more widely known version the *sale* were made by Revs Guru the mythical first blacksmith. Cf pp. 119-120.

4 We shall see later that in this point Gond mythology is not at all consistent. Cf p. 243

which brothers-in-law, which father's brothers, which mother's brothers, and which to be fathers-in-law and sons-in-law, with whom it was lawful to marry. Then the Gonds celebrated marriages, and at last Lingal fetched Dan Guru, the Pardhan. The old man came and with him his four sons, Budra, Sudwa, Isru and Suka, and to each kin-group Pahandi Kupar Lingal gave one Pardhan.

*Other Myths of the Establishment of Persa Pen.*

While in the myths of the liberation of the Gond gods from the primeval cave, there is at least a certain measure of agreement, a confusing number of divergent tales explain the establishment of the cult of the Persa Pen among the Gonds settled at Dhanegaon. The following version was told by Marpachi Sukia, a Pardhan of a four-brother clan and I quote it here in outline because it contains several motifs lacking in other versions.

When Sri Shembu confined the twelve threshing-floors of Gond gods in the cave, he posted a *maisama*,<sup>1</sup> as tall as a palmyra palm, to stand guard, ordering her to devour any who dared approach.

After twelve years Pahandi Kupar Lingal, the *katora* of the Gond gods came from his home-village Bijlipura and seeing the *maisama*, he put one of his feet on her head and pushed her deep into the ground. Then he opened the cave and let out the Gond gods, first the five-*wen* brothers, then the six-*wen* brothers, then the seven-*wen* brothers, then the four-*wen* brothers, and at last the gods of three-*wen*, two-*wen*, one-*wen* and half-*wen*.<sup>2</sup> He told them to go to a nearby river, bathe and eat, and then he led them to Dhanegaon where all built houses.

But after some time the Gonds of seven, six, five, and four, *wen*, said to Pahandi Kupar Lingal: "Now we are no longer gods but men, we must have gods; where shall we find great gods whom we can worship?"

Pahandi Kupar Lingal did not know where to find Persa Pen for his Gonds; so he went to ask Sri Shembu. But neither could the god Shembu give any advice. He sent Lingal to his younger brother Barumdevi, and Barumdevi sent him to Shembu's assistant Satvi, but Satvi only suggested asking Kalipursur Pen, the father of Bhart Raja.

So Pahandi Kupar Lingal sought out Kalipursur Pen and told of his errand. Then the god said, "Go to the forest and there you will find a house, so built that not even a fly can enter: inside are the gods for your Gonds."

1. *Maisama* are deities of lower order, usually thought female; their typical function is the guarding of gates or entrances.

2. The teller of the myth explained that the three-*wen* Gonds are the Dhurwe Gonds, the two-*wen* Gonds the Son-Dhurwe Gonds, the one-*wen* Gonds the Rup Dhurwe Gonds (often identified with the Kolams) and the half-*wen* Gonds the Korku Gonds.

Accordingly Pahandi Kupar Lingal went to the forest and found the house of which Kalipursur Pen had spoken. Inside a woman slept. She was Agin Vanti,<sup>1</sup> the mother of the gods, and beside her lay four golden staves, these were the gods. Silently Pahandi Kupar Lingal entered the house, took the golden staves and stole away. But at that moment Agin Vanti awoke, she took a fire-brand from the hearth and threw it after Lingal. The flame touched his shoulder and the four staves, catching fire, burnt till they were black; this is why the *sale* are now black and of iron.

These four staves Pahandi Kupar Lingal took to Dhanegaon, he sent the Gonds to bring four fly-whisks (*chauwur*), ordered from a Wojari sets of seven, six, five and four bells, and asked of Gobdeo Raja, a brother of Sri Shembu, four pieces of cloth. Then he himself went in search of bamboo and coming at last to the cluster, which had once been Kalikankali, cut from it four shafts. Of all these objects, *chauwur*, *sale*, bells, cloth and bamboo-shafts he made the symbols of Persa Pen.

Then Pahandi Kupar Lingal ordered the Gonds to prepare a feast, bring spurred cocks, horned-goats and two-year old cows as sacrificial animals. When all was ready he called the Gonds of seven, six, five and four—*wen* and said: "Now we must have music, you play the fiddle, you the trumpet and you the drums." But the Gonds refused. "No! We won't play fiddle and trumpet," they shouted, "if we play fiddle and trumpet we shall be told to sit aside at feasts. Find some one else to play these instruments." Then Pahandi Kupar Lingal himself made a fiddle and a trumpet, but who was to play them? Once more he approached Sri Shembu, but the god was in no mood to answer his question and said curtly: "Lankipater Ravana has robbed the wife of Ramchandra, all work has stopped and my court-house is closed. I cannot help you, but take Daniyevdan Guru with you to Dhanegaon, he will advise you."

Pahandi Kupar Lingal returned with Daniyevdan Guru to Dhanegaon and there summoned a great panchayat. There numerous gods foregathered, Bhimana Pen, Sri Shek, Chandra-Sunya, the sun and the moon, and many others. They sat down and deliberated for a long time, at last they decided that Daniyevdan Guru's youngest son Hirasuka should be appointed as servant to Pahandi Kupar Lingal with the special task of assisting in the cult of the four Persa Pen of the Gonds. Thus Hirasuka became a *Pardhan* and, providing for his sustenance, Pahandi Kupar Lingal entitled him to collect from the Gonds bride-capture fees, marriage fees, birth fees, abduction fees and death fees.

Next Pahandi Kupar Lingal went to Nagarkot, the home of Vias

<sup>1</sup> Agin Vanti and Belkaval Dharti are two sisters believed to dwell in the earth and protect the crops.

Guru, and asked his daughter Hirabai in marriage for Hirasuka, the Pardhan. Then the Pardhan played fiddle and trumpet, and the Gonds beat the drums.<sup>1</sup> Pahandi Kupaṅ Lingal led all the Gonds to the river, and there divided them into four kin-groups; to each group he gave a *chauwur* and a *sale*, and then he taught them how to celebrate the Persa Pen rites. But he did not give any gods to the Gonds of three-*wen*, two-*wen*, one-*wen* and half-*wen*.

None of the myths so far quoted ascribes to the four *sale* or spear-heads an origin explaining their sacred character. Such an explanation is contained, however, in the great Creation Myth, the full text of which shall be given in the relevant context in Book II; here only the relevant episodes may find a place:

When the *wen* of the four kin-groups were married they spoke to Pahandi Kupaṅ Lingal: "Now we are married, now we want gods, you bring us gods." So Lingal went to god Shembu and asked him for gods to give to his *wen*.

Now a long time before Shembu had sent for Reva Guru of Reva Isle, and ordered him to mould four *sale*, four spear-heads. Reva Guru had thought and thought. How could he obey the orders of God Shembu? At last he decided to slay his eldest son: from his head he formed an anvil, from his hands tongs, from his feet hammers and from his skin bellows. He lit a fire and, melting ore, produced iron to make into *sale*; then he heated the iron in the forge and when it was red hot grasped it with tongs, and put it on the anvil. But ere he could strike even a single blow, there was a crash as of thunder,—the iron split into four *sale* and at once vanished from sight; through the air they sprang and came to rest on the isle Kuruwadip. But Shembu, seeing that they were still fiery, picked them up and threw them to Agastape, the sky spirit. But the sky could not hold the four burning *sale* and he tossed them to the Cloud king. Still the iron was so hot that the clouds began to dissolve and so the Cloud King flung them into the ocean.<sup>2</sup> Then the ocean began to boil and the fish to die, and so Patal Guru took the *sale* from the water carried them to his residence and there transformed them into small boys whom he put in a cradle.

From the chips of lesser iron that remained from the virgin iron, Reva Guru the blacksmith forged *munda* (posts), four *sale*, spears with long blades, points for spears, swords, chains and clubs; these he threw into Kuruwadip to cool, but being still red hot they set fire to the forest.

Now when Pahandi Kupaṅ Lingal asked Shembu for gods for his Gond-*wen*, Shembu began to think: 'What gods shall I give to the

1. According to another version Hirasuka the Pardhan only played the fiddle: in the beginning no Pardhan knew how to play the trumpet, it was only much later that Pardhans learnt from musicians of Mang caste how to blow trumpets.

2. It is believed that the flash left by the *sale* in the clouds is perpetuated in the shape of lightning.

Gonds? I shall give them those *sale* as gods, those *sale* formed first from the virgin iron which now lie with Patāl Guru, these Gond *u en* are strong and brave, the *sale* of virgin iron will be fitting gods for them' So he said to Lingal. "In the ocean of sixty seas the *sale* went to bathe, now they are with Patāl Guru. Lay hold of them and take them to the Gond-*u en* who are devout and pious, only they are worthy to worship these *sale*."

So Lingal went to Patāl Guru and said, "Give me those *sale* who bathe in your realm." Patāl Guru did as he wished, through the *pen-gara* he sent them over the *pen-gara* and

the spider spirit, who was the first to spin and to weave.

Next he went to Somaraur Damaraur, the brass founder in Reva-dip and received from him bells and spoons for the four kin groups. Then he fetched bamboo staves from Jagas Guru in the ocean of the sixty seas. Finally he went to Pon Dip and cut off the tail hair of the god's cows (*pen mura*) and made the hair into Gangamans *chainaur*.

When he had brought all these things to Poropatār Dhanegaon he went to Pata Dip, there lived Gudral, the Lame Man, and Gudi, the Blind Woman. To them was born a son with four horns, and when Lingal approached he found the mother rocking a cradle and singing.

With his *dhōti* flapping about the ankles,  
His hair tied up in a high knot,

she asked— "Who are you?"  
she asked— "I am the priest of the twelve threshing floors of Gond *u en*, I have brought for them gods and all that is necessary for the sacred rites, now I have come to find them clan priests (*katora*)."—  
"Take my son Lingal," replied the Blind woman, "but treat him with honour."

So Lingal took the boy on his arm, and in a flash the boy turned into four *katora*. Lingal led them to Dhanegaon and married them to the daughters of Relegaure. Then he established at Poropatār Dhanegaon four gods places (*pen gara*), four feast places (*warau argara*) four flags, four *munda* posts, four caves (*yadi*)<sup>1</sup> and instituted four religious rites (*jugaḍi*)<sup>2</sup>.

1. The four *pad* are according to present Gond belief. Sursuryadi, the primal cave near Dhanegaon, in which the Gond gods were embodied, the pit at the *pen-gara* of Dhanegaon and, symbolizing it, the pit at any *pen-gara*, the hollow in which a child is bathed after birth, and the grave.

2. The four *jugaḍi* are the birth rites, the marriage rites, the funeral rites and the rites at the memorial feast (*p. tre*).



But when the Gonds began to worship the newly won Persa Pen, and sacrificed fowls and goats before the four *sale*, the earth opened suddenly and the four *sale* disappeared and returned to Patal Guru, saying that they would not stay with the Gonds. So the rite came to an abrupt end and Lingal went once more to Sri Shembu to ask for advice.

Sri Shembu told him to go to Kuruwa Dip where the *sale*, spears, swords and axes made by Reva Guru of the iron left over from the forging of the original *sale* were still burning in an enormous fire. Try as he might, Pahandi Kupar Lingal could not approach the fire. So he sought the help of Laudas Guru; the sage approached the fire and promised Agin Mata, the Fire Goddess, to give his own head and blood, if only she suffered him to take the *sale*. At last she yielded to his entreaties and Laudas Guru drew the *sale* out of the fire, and went with Pahandi Kupar Lingal to Dhanegaon.

There the new *sale* were installed and the Gonds resumed the interrupted feast. But the rite had hardly begun, when Agin Mata in the shape of a fiery monster, appeared at the feast place. Blazing and roaring she filled the space between earth and sky, and trees and bushes were singed by her breath. Threatening to devour Laudas Guru, Pahandi Kupar Lingal and the Gonds, she demanded the blood which the sage had promised.

In terror Pahandi Kupar Lingal ran to Sri Shembu for help. "Go to Munc Guru," said the god, "and ask him to give you his youngest son; he will help you."

Now Munc Guru had four sons, Dhani, Audhani, Nidhani and Hira. He consented to send Hira with Pahandi Kupar Lingal to help him and the Gond gods in their danger. But Hira's mother, Hirabai, would not allow her youngest son to go unprotected, and in order to be always with him she transformed herself into a *kingri*, the Pardhan's fiddle, and rested henceforth as a guardian on his shoulder.

When Pahandi Kupar Lingal and Hira reached Dhanegaon, Hira stepped before the terrible shape of Agin Mata and began playing his fiddle. As the bow glided *ki-ki-ki* over the chords, a movement resembling the cutting strokes of a knife, he threatened Agin Mata to cut her head off, and spell-bound by the fiddle's magic sound, the fiery goddess desisted from harming the Gonds and returned to Kuruwa Dip. Thus Pahandi Kupar Lingal and the Gonds could resume the interrupted rites.<sup>1</sup>

Yet another version of the events that followed the establishment of the Gonds in Dhanegaon and led to their ultimate dispersal is con-

1. According to another version of this myth, it was not Agin Mata the Goddess of Fire, who threatened to devour Lingal and the Gonds, but the Persa Pen whose terrific, untamed power endangered the Gonds and had to be exorcised by the Pardhan's magical music. Most Gonds believe indeed that the Pardhan's play on the *kingri* during the Persa Pen rites is necessary to tame the fierce god and preserve the worshippers from any evil.

tained in the myth of Jangu Bai, which is told by Pardhans of the Sarpe  
 Cf. pp  
 (bira-  
 d in a  
 golden temple on an island in the sea. With promises of sacrifices of  
 cows and offerings of *mahua* liquor the Gonds helped by Pahandi Kupa-  
 Lingal and the Pardhan Hiramān induced the four brothers spear-head  
 to dwell with them at Dhanegaon, but the father Persa Pen, remained  
 on his island

### *The Origin of the Sarpe Saga*

The Pardhan Vetī - 17  
 . . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 . . . . .

These eight clans constituting the Sarpe Saga, assert that they  
 were never in the primeval cave and refute all suggestions that they  
 lived at Dhanegaon. They owe their origin to the goddess Jangu Bai,  
 whose cult is now their special responsibility. Like the clans of the  
 Pandwen Saga, they are six-*uen* clans, the bamboo shafts used at their  
 annual rites have six nodes and a set of six brass bells are among  
 their ritual objects, but in their case the myths speak of no connection  
 with six original brothers, but always of the 'eight houses' attached to  
 the goddess Jangu Bai. We have heard already that Jangu Bai asked a  
 boon of Pahandi Kupa Lingal, in return for her help in the liberation  
 of the Gond gods, she was to receive a kin-group (*saga*), and although  
 first promising to give her whatever she desired, once the Gond gods  
 were liberated (unable to give her a *saga* Ac-  
 p 110) she left Lingal in anger  
 of her own strength she would

There is general agreement on  
 the manner in which the 'eight houses' came into being, but other ver-  
 sions gloss over the break between Lingal and Jangu Bai, so that some-  
 times it even appears that Lingal was instrumental in furnishing Jangu  
 Bai with worshippers

The following version of the myth of Jangu Bai, as told by the  
 Pardhan Vetī Tukaram of Pitebangara village of Utnur Taluq, not  
 only contains the full story of the goddess' miraculous birth and her  
 intervention in the fortunes of the primeval Gonds, but includes also  
 accounts of several episodes in Gond mythology not directly connected  
 with Jangu Bai or her cult. As a typical example of a myth of origin  
 it is recorded here in its complete form and while this involves a certain  
 amount of repetition, it demonstrates the extent of variation among the  
 myths in the repertoire of Pardhans of different clans:

## THE MYTH OF JANGU BAI

*The Birth of Jangu Bai*

A spirit<sup>1</sup> was born, Prabhu Niranjan Guru was born,  
 After his birth, water came into being,  
 Then spread the water, a mighty ocean,  
 It spread and all the spirits were born.  
 After the spirits came the earth into being,  
 The Earth Mother and Aktak the father,  
 Hamran, the grandsire, the daughter Earth,  
 On the water's surface rose Earth.  
 Nine parts were water, one part was earth.  
 In the middle was earth, round it was water;  
 Then fifty-six crores of gods came into being  
 Suraj, the sun and Chandur, the moon came into being.  
 Then unto each god was given his realm,  
 Bhagwan assigned to each god his realm.  
 Then was born Nirumchari Nirumdhari, famed for his penance,<sup>2</sup>  
 On the isle Kaiabhandar dwelt the god Sardur  
 His son was the god Kosejartar; what did he say?  
 "Worms and ants have their mates, I am without.  
 To ask for the reason I'll go to god Shembu."  
 He made himself ready, saddled his winged steed.  
 A Thursday it was; he mounted the flying horse,  
 Rode on the wings of a raging storm,  
 Hills were upturned, and trees were derooted,  
 The stones on the ground flew into the air.  
 From Mount Dhauragiri, god Shembu saw him  
 Saw Kosejartar cross sphere after sphere,  
 Ere he reached the mount Dhauragiri  
 So great was his force that it shook the mount Dhauragiri  
 Where fifty-six crores of gods were seated in council;  
 When the mount shook, they pressed round god Shembu:  
 "Who is this powerful god, who is coming to see us?"

1. 'Spirit' here translates the word guru which in Gondi mythology has not its usual meaning but is used for supernatural beings with divine attributes.

2. This 'guru' has the attribute Tapedar, which means literally 'the one who performs penance (tap)'.  
(tap).

Abruptly in mid air halted the horse, Kosejartar dismounted,  
 Bowed to the gods and greeted them "Ram, Ram  
 Bhagawan blessed him, "Ram, Ram" bade the assembly,  
 Then Bhagawan turned to the god Kosejartar!

'Leaving your throne on the isle Kaiabhandar, why have you come?

"In search of a mate I have come

Sparrows and larks are in pairs,

Worms and ants are in pairs,

Why should I live alone? Without a mate

"How shall I further my line?" Thus he questioned

Bhagawan called the four Brahmadevas, told them to bring

The book seven yards long and as broad as the sky,

The book of men about to be born, the silvery book

'Look in your book and tell Kosejartar where is his mate"

The Brahmadevas opened the book and started to search

From morning twelve hours passed, but nothing they found,

Dusk was coming, lighting their lamps they continued to search,

But still found nothing midnight passed, yet in vain was the search

Again next day they went on searching from morning till noon,

Another day passed, three days and four days passed in searching

At last, on the fifth day they found the word and announced

"Where the sky meets the water, there on the water's surface

"Is Jara Dip with fourteen palm trees, there water rises,

"A girl twelve years old dances and plays on the spouting water,

"In her winnowing fan she tosses pearls and golden mohurs,

"Seraj Mahi her father, her mother the goddess Kankani,

"Their daughter's name Surebhangral Jaramoti,'

"Thus in the book is it written,' so said Brahmadev to the god Kosejartar

"If you will go, then depart, if not, then return to the isle Kaiabhandar

"That is your mate"—"Is this truth or a falsehood?" asked Kosejartar

"My book does not lie"—"Well then I will go,"

So said Kosejartar; he bade "Ram, Ram," and prostrated himself,

God Shembu gave him his blessing and told him to go.

He mounted the horse, it rose and took the way of the stars,

A rising cloud, a threatening storm,

Hidden he was from the girl,

His hands did not touch her, only his shadow fell on her

Above her the horse stormed past,

Kosejartar rode on to the sea to bathe,

Washed away his desire, then took the road to Kaiabhandar.

Fire seized Surebhangral Jaramoti,

Fire burnt in her loins, fire ran through her body.

"Why does my body burn? Twelve years have I played

"Yet never before has such a thing seized me.

"Could I but see it, I would grasp it and throw it away.

"Is it a god or a demon, a ghost or a ghostlike being?"

As she spoke, she gave birth to a girl.

"Before I was born, you called me ghost and demon!

Yet, you are my mother." Blazing the child stood up.

Grown to a girl of six years, before her mother she stood,

Agindhud Janguwen Raitar,

Sardur her grandfather, Kosejartar her father, Surebhangral  
Jaramoti her mother.

What did she say to her mother?

"Such names did you call me! I won't look on your face!"

"Mine was the fault," admitted the mother and tried to  
console her,

Grandfather and grandmother came and spoke to her.

"No, I won't listen; here I'll not stay."

Anger seized her; persuasion was fruitless.

From the nine-walled Jara Dip, descended Jangu the goddess,

To Patar Dip of nine countries, descended the goddess,

Went straight to Patar Shek.

Patar Shek balanced the earth on his head,

To him she went and greeted him "Ram, Ram."

"Who are you girl?" asked Patar Shek,

"I am Janguwen Raitar,"—"Who are your parents?"

' Sardhur my grandsire, Kosejartar my father, Surebhangral  
Jaramoti, my mother'

Patar Shek lifted his eyes and beheld her,  
Bright as the sun was her beauty, his sense failed him.  
Blinded Patar Shek trembled with fear,  
And the Earth too trembled and shook  
Regaining his senses, he steadied himself

"Why did you come girl?"

"Your home shall be mine, here shall I sit in a swing,  
Therefore I came —Patar Shek pondered

'With her mother she would not remain; how can she stay here  
with me?"

Such thoughts he turned in his mind, then spoke aloud

"Your fame and your realm,<sup>1</sup> I will show you"

'Why do I need a realm?' To live here with you I have come."

No Future ages will witness your fame

'Thus have I spoken, and now I shall show you your realm."

"Well, then show me what realm there may be."

First what realm did Patar Shek show to the girl?

The land of golden *mugri* flowers, he showed her

"This is one realm, does this please you?"

No, here I won't live,' she said, and so he left it

Then he showed her Sidkot Nagveli Giroti,

Would you like to live here?"—"No, I won't live here"

Then the third realm, Hirakhani, he showed her,

And after that, the realm of pearls and gold

"Would you like to live here, oh mother?"

"Why do you press me again and again? There I won't live

"If I am angry, seven and seven worlds

"I shall set on fire and utterly wreck them."

Wrath seized the girl, lightning flashed,

She smashed the walls of Nankhand Patar

Nakanur she chose as her seat,

Saw the land and made it her own,

Between seven mountains the cleft

Between twelve hills the valley,

<sup>1</sup> *Barwas* is only inaccurately realm it means a self-contained town ruled by a chief rather than a large tract of country

Manikgarh Fort in Rajura, Parandoli her seat  
 There she chose to reside,  
 There was a swing with golden chains and a golden shade,  
 For play and enjoyment a parrot in a golden cage,  
 In other cages minahs and starlings,  
 To speak to her there were minahs and parrots.  
 Jangu Bai's palace rose at her seat Parandoli.  
 Then rose the palace of Gaimukh Shek,  
 Then rose the palace of her friend the Porcupine woman,  
 Near it the palace of Puli, the striped, clawed tiger.  
 Four palaces stood completed.  
 Then the cows of the gods and the buffalots of the forest came  
 Henceforth to stay at Parandoli.  
 Six inner-chambers, like sister's contained Parandoli  
 For bathing, there was a deep rocky pool,  
 For the washing of hands a basket shaped pool,  
 For the cleaning of lentils a spring,  
 For the drawing of water a stream,  
 For the drying of clothes the serrated battlements,  
 For the drying of hair the mighty door post.  
 This she took as her seat and her realm.  
 "How shall my name become famous?"  
 All the gods she invited, sending them written letters.  
 "In the whole world, there is no bazaar,  
 "If I hold a bazaar, I will become famous."  
 Shops of jewels and bangles were kept by the gods  
 At Chilaidevapur was held the bazaar.  
 These are the things she purchased from the bazaar,  
 Buying from every god's shop, she brought sugar, lentils and rice,  
 Then with her purchases prepared a meal.  
 Feasted the gathering of gods, and in this way celebrated  
 The foundation of her seat Parandoli.  
 And then all the gods returned to their homes.

*The Birth of Pahandi Kupar Lingal*

At Poropatar Bijlipura,—who lived at Bijlipura?

Jalkadev, the husband, and his queen Hiradevi,  
Hiradevi gave birth to a son  
On the hands *ling*, on the feet *ling* on the throat a *ling*, on the  
head a *ling*"<sup>1</sup>

What then said Hiradevi the mother

I will not nurse him, on the hands and feet he has knots,  
Such a child I won't nurse"—She took the boy to Kuruwa  
Dip, a thicket deep in the forest,

Left him there and returned to her home

The boy was left crying, deep in the forest Kuruwa Dip  
Who heard his crying? In Nankhandpatar Dip, the sage  
Sonkastar,

'What noise do I hear?' The sage set out,

Came to the source of the noise, came near to the boy

What crying is this? Lo! a noble born boy! Why was he  
left here?'

Took the boy in his arms, took him home to his house,

Washed him and fed him with sugar and water,

Then he took from his chest a book of silver,

Began to read in the book And there he found

'His name is Pahanda Kupar Lingal,

His parents Jalkadevmadsor and Hiradevi, the mother,

Lo his name and clan shall be famous in future

Twelve threshing floors of Gond gods will be born,

When they are born, he will be their priest'

So he took care of the boy As the boy grew,

He taught him knowledge and reading, taught him wisdom

Grown up he was, still the sage taught him,

All his knowledge he gave him

"Go now to Porapatar Bijlipura" How did he equip him?

Gave in his hand the book of the Parenda Khara Gond gods.

A bow and arrows he gave him,

A gun with a powder horn on his hip and smaller horn round  
his neck

A guitar with twelve stops, with strings of silk and a gourd of  
the god flower (as sound box) —Thus he equipped him.

Lingal bowed at the sage's feet "Now I am going

<sup>1</sup> The narrator obviously thinks here of the small silver *ling*s worn as ornaments by Langayats and not of exta phallia.



"To mother and father at Bijlipura I'll go."

Went there and stood in the court-yard,

The mother did not know him.

On the veranda he stood, the mother saw him, but did not know him.

Pahandi Kupar Lingal spoke to his mother,—what did he say?

"Who am I, mother?"—"I do not know who you are, son."

"How many sons have you mother?"

"Five sons are in my house."

"Did you give birth only to five? Remember well, mother."

"I gave birth to one more, him I exposed in the forest."

"I am he, mother. Remembering my home I have come.

Tell me the names of your other sons."

"Aha Raur, Maha Raur, Tete Raur, Junga Raur, Hira Raur."

"I am the sixth, I am the eldest, I am Pahandi Kupar Lingal, oh mother."

The father learnt too that he had six sons,

Heir to the throne was Pahandi Kupar Lingal.

### III

#### *Kalikankali*

On an island in the ocean, thereon stood two temples,

In one temple a male god, Niramiranjan the god,

In the other temple dwelt a goddess.

Full twelve years the two gods dwelt there,

But neither saw the other's face, neither came near to the other.

Then they came out, both gods came out.

From afar in the flash of their eyes they united.

Their hands did not touch,

From afar they beheld each other.

Through the flash of their eyes the goddess conceived.

Two lives were in her,

Nine months passed, nine hours passed,

Her pains started, and a girl was born.

"Why had this girl to be born?"

Gone is my power and my virtue  
This girl I won't nurse"

Seizing the child by both legs,

Garrarrara she whirled her around, threw her far off and  
into the sea

The girl's father stood watching—"Why did you fling her  
away?"—

"If you want her, go and fetch her yourself"

The father went waded into the sea and brought back his  
daughter

Took out a pair of golden scales and brought five *mugri* flowers,

Made the child sleep and placed her on one of the pans

Dropped on the other the five *mugri* flowers

He lifted the scales and lo! the five flowers were balanced

"My daughter is blessed with high virtue," he said,

And so he gave her the name of Kankali

Then he asked the mother to nurse her,

The girl sucked the milk and grew,

Thus she grew to the age of twelve years,

Fetches from the sea, water in golden pitchers for mother  
and father

Twelve years passed, and daily her father weighed her,

Equal remained her weight to that of five *mugri* flowers

Thus twelve years passed while the girl served her parents.

In nunc walled Dhauragiri dwelt the god Shembu,

With him lived fifty six crores of gods

Shembu Mahadeo, what did he say?"—"Friends!

To-day is Thursday, let us go to the sea and bathe"

So they made ready, and went on their way to the sea

Reaching the sea, they bathed in the ocean,

Then emerged and sat on the grass by the shore.

Fifty-six crores of gods sat on the grass,

Like *mugri* flowers, like yellow gourd blossoms,

Rubbed sandalwood on their hands

Then, who appeared? With golden pitcher and

Silver cushion Kalikankali came to fetch water,

Put down the pitcher, and took off bodice and *sari*

As she dropped them, they fell in the water,  
Then she bathed splashing the water.  
As the girl bathed, god Shembu and fifty-six crores of gods  
looked on ;  
The one asked the other: " Who may this be?"  
When the girl came out, all the gods saw it was Kalikankali.  
They clapped their hands and shouted with laughter,  
Then the girl saw them.—' I am disgraced.'  
Thought Kalikankali, and hurriedly donned bodice and *sari*.  
' My parents will scold me for this disgrace.'  
She filled her gold pitcher and lifted it up.  
Daily with ease she had lifted it on to her head ;  
Today she can't lift it, hands and feet feel too tired.  
From the knee to the chest, and the chest to the shoulder  
she lifts it up to her head.  
Daily the shore bank, three palm-trees high, she had climbed  
in a moment,  
Today the girl was soon short of breath.  
With her hand pressed to her side, she breathed heavily,  
Slowly she climbed up to the temple,  
And put down pitcher and cushion.  
Her father took out the golden scales,  
Took five *mulgi* flowers and weighed his daughter against  
them.  
When he lifted the scales, down went the girl,  
And up went the pan with the flowers.  
Dropping the scales, the father grew angry.  
" Off with you girl! Never again look on my face  
" Your virtue is lost; go where you please."  
Crying she went to her mother.  
" Why are you crying, oh! daughter?"  
" Father has sent me away"—" What did he say?"  
" Father said: ' Off with you, go. Never again look on my  
face.'"  
From there the girl went into the world.  
Followed a path along the shore of the sea.  
She walked and walked till nine months had passed;

In Kuruwa Dip she came to a forest,  
 Sat down to rest in the forest  
 Two lives were in her,  
 She leant against a *saj* tree,<sup>1</sup> before her was a *kursi* tree,<sup>2</sup>  
 Nine months and nine hours had passed, to bear a child she  
     sat down  
 Oh Bhagwan! What did she think?  
 No one behind, no one in front, what did she think?  
 Thus the twelve threshing floors of Gond gods were born;  
 After them Maratha gods were born,  
 After them Telugu gods were born.  
 Fifty-six crores of gods were born  
 Leaving them there the girl took the road to her parents  
 Bathed in the sea and came to mother and father,  
 "Ram, Ram, father Ram, Ram, mother," she said.  
 "I have come, oh father, I have washed and bathed  
 "And the gods I bore I have left behind"  
 "True you have come yet a sword loses its sharpness but once,  
 "Likewise your virtue is lost for ever  
 "Go where you will but don't remain here"  
 Crying she left for the wide world—Where did she go?  
 To Benares and to Rameswaram; hoping to find shelter  
 She wandered all the world over, in all four directions she  
     roamed,  
 But nowhere found shelter.  
 "If your parents won't keep you, neither will we!"  
 Weakened by childbirth, her hair kept on falling,  
 And wherever it dropped *serua* and *sukra* grass sprouted  
 Thus did she wander, where did she go?  
 To Jangu Bai's seat Parandoli, near Manikgarh and Rajura  
 To Jangu Bai she went, greeted her "Ram, Ram, oh Bai."  
 "Whence have you come girl, roaming around?"  
 "I bore twelve threshing floors of Gond gods,  
 "Telugu gods and fifty-six crores of Maratha gods.  
 "My parents say I have lost my virtue and they drove me away

1. *Ternstroemia litoralis*.

2. *Cremna Rothii*.

"So roaming the world I have come.  
 "No god gave me shelter."  
 "Then stay girl. Stay here without fear.  
 "Here nothing is wanting.  
 "Food, sugar and dal we have in plenty.  
 "Sons you have born, to visit you they will come;  
 "Sweetened offerings they will bring you in future.  
 "Here in the sacred place is a pillar to Lachmi  
 "That carries a light."

## IV

*Sri Shembu and Parvati adopt the Gond gods.*

At Dhauragiri Shembu Mahadeo and Girjal Parvati  
 Mounted their white bull to roam the world.  
 God Shembu sat in front near the head,  
 Parvati sat behind near the tail;  
 All over the world they rode, all the four quarters,  
 North and south, east and west they saw.  
 On their way home to Dhauragiri, they passed through the  
     forest of Kuruwa Dip,  
 There under a *saj* tree<sup>1</sup> were all the Gond gods,  
*Chaia, chaia* their whimpering sounded, as the Nandi  
     approached  
 "What cry is this, husband?" asked Parvati  
 God Shembu said: "It may be the cry of young birds;  
 "Would you like to see?" He stopped the bull,  
 "I will see what cry this may be," said Parvati.  
 He turned the bull and came to the place of the gods.  
 "Who are these, Lord?"—"These are gods, Queen."  
 "If I leave them here and go, I commit a great sin,  
 "Let us take them with us."—"If you want to nurse them,  
     take them oh Queen."  
 She dismounted and drew the silver embroidered *sari*  
 From her head and put the gods in its fold.  
 Then she mounted the bull and they started on the road to  
     Dhauragiri,

1. *Terminalia tomentosa*,

There they dismounted and taking the gods

Parvati lay down to rest on her cot

"Lord, what food shall I give to these gods?"

"To Gond gods give the milk of your right breast,

"To the Telugu and Maratha gods give the milk of your  
left breast"

She started to suckle the Gond gods,

From her left breast drank the Telugu and Maratha gods

So she suckled them daily

Six months and twelve months passed;

When there was milk the Gond gods sucked, and when  
blood came they kept on sucking.

The right breast of the goddess Girja shrivelled,

But the left breast which she gave to the other gods remain-  
ed firm

They too drank her milk, but when blood came they stopped  
sucking

One day god Shembu sat on his bed, before him stood Girja  
Parvati

God Shembu saw his queen and his eye fell on her breasts.

"Oh what is this This breast is shrivelled.

"And this one remains healthy What is the cause?

"These gods have no sense Now what shall we do?"

What did he say to his queen? "Prepare a meal for the gods,

"Vegetables from eighteen gardens, rice and lentils,

"Sugar and butter, and tamarind relish, all that prepare;

"At the feast we will see what is what"

God Shembu called the gods and told them:

"Go, wash yourselves and come back!"—All gods went to bathe.

All went to bathe in the river Penganga

When they returned god Shembu laid leaf plates, and invited  
the gods to be seated

Girja Parvati served out the food on the plates

Rice, lentils and sugar, butter and tamarind relish

Mahadeo sat watching and bade them begin;

Happily they partook of the meal.

What plan Mahadeo had in his mind, the gods did not know.

The next day, what did he do? In what shape appeared  
God Shembu?

He left the shape of Mahadeo and took the appearance of  
Krishna;

He came and sat on a *palas* leaf.

When the gods came out to throw away the leaf plates

They saw the Lord Krishna,—whence had he come?

“Ram, Ram,” all the gods greeted him.

“Whence, Maharaj, have you come this morning?”

“Your father, Mahadeo, is giving a feast, therefore I came.

“What kind of food did he prepare?” asked he of the Telugu  
and Maratha gods.

“Oh, Lord, excellent food, we enjoyed it heartily.”

Then he asked the Gond gods: “Did you also enjoy it?”

“It was not to our taste, we hardly enjoyed it.”

“What do you eat then?”—“The food that pleases us,  
where shall we get it?”

“Speak out, why don’t you tell me?” said Shembu.

Then they started to tell: “To our taste is juicy stewed meat,

“Maize well cooked and curry of meat.

“That is what we call a good meal,

“And really strong liquor we like.”

Krishna rose from his seat, changed back into the shape of  
Mahadeo.

What did he say to Parvati: “This is why they have drained  
your breast.

“Blood eaters are they, these Gond gods.”

Then he took a blank sheet of paper,—whose address did he  
write?

He wrote a letter to Poropatar Bijlipura

‘Pahandi Kupar Lingal send me at once a pot of pure liquor,  
Go, shoot a sambar, and send me its hind leg.’

He sent off the letter and it reached Pahandi Kupar Lingal,  
Who took the paper and read it.

He told the distiller to keep ready a pot full of liquor,

Then he went hunting, went to the forest,

Shot a sambar and brought the meat home.

To Shembu Mahadeo he sent one hind leg and a potful of liquor.

When it arrived, food was prepared, maize ground and meat  
curry cooked

What did Shembu say to the Gond gods "Go, bathe,  
"And on your way back bring leaves as plates for the meat"

All the Gond gods went to bathe,

Jumped into the deep pool of Sirmal, shouting *Chaho'*

Quickly they bathed and came out

Now what leaves shall we take? let us take teak leaves!"

The teak leaves they plucked and carried them home,

"Have you all come? Sit down in the open,

"Sit down in a line and take your leaf plates

"I'll serve the food" They sat down with their leaves

The pot with liquor he placed before them

With a gourd ladle god Shembu poured liquor into the leaf-cups

Drink and taste it,' he said, to each god he gave one cup

Gond gods of all four kin groups were there

They drank, and after the fourth cup, were drunk

He served them with well boiled maize

With a handful of meat heaped on each helping

Quite tipsy, they began to talk all at once

"Give us permission to start on the food"

"All right now you may eat"—

'This is the right food, such a meal we enjoy!"

"Fools, that you are, if it's such food that suits you"

'Sucking her blood you have withered Parvati's breast'

At once he rubbed dirt from his left thigh,

Kneading it shaped it into a squirrel

Then on its back he drew three lines with his fingers,

Poured life essence on it and let it out where the gods were  
eating

"What creature is this? It is running!" shouted the Gond gods

Leaving their leaf plates, all the gods chased it,

Ahead ran the squirrel, the gods ran behind

Running they came to the cave Pattasur Yadi,

Into the cave jumped the squirrel,

After it jumped the Gond gods,



All the twelve threshing floors of Gond gods,  
 Jumped into the cave.  
 Shembu Mahadeo followed, saw them entering the cave.  
 "Foolish gods, for full twelve years will you stay in this cave."  
 He shut the cave with a stone, seven yards long  
 Made *sukra* grass to grow over it, and  
 Planted a palm tree, which grew to great height.  
 Then he made two Kauli birds,  
 Fashioned them male and female;  
 The beaks he made a foot and a half, the claws a foot and  
 a half long.  
 Then he poured life water on them and thus made them live.  
 "Why did you make us, Shembu?" asked the two birds.  
 "Whosoever comes to this cave, kill and devour him.  
 "Suffer none to approach.  
 "Dwell in this tree; remain always on guard.  
 "Fly to the sea and feed on pearls, but return,  
 "Or eat elephants, and live here in peace."  
 Thus spoke Shembu and returned to his throne,  
 To create and to bring destruction.  
 He said to his Queen: "You breast they have withered  
 "Eaters of flesh and drinkers of spirit are they,  
 "As such I have banished them into the cave.  
 "There let them remain for twelve years.  
 "I cannot master them; your blood they have sucked  
 "And no one on earth can control them.  
 "They are not to be freed; ants shall carry *sukra* seed  
 "To the cave as food for those gods, their drink shall be  
 "The water that filters through cracks."—Thus ordained  
 Mahadeo.

## V

*Pahandi Kupar Lingal shoots a Sambar.*

At Parandoli the town of seven hundred *akara*, nine hundred  
*betal*,  
 What did Jangu Bai think to herself? She pondered:

'Kalikankali gave birth to Gond gods  
 But there is no sign of them I'll go and find them.  
 They were with god Shembu Shall I go there?  
 To whom shall I go first?  
 At Poropatar Bijlpura lives brother Pahandi Kupaṛ Lingal,  
 Shall I go to him? —She saddled her flying steed,  
 Called all the gods of her household and told them  
 "I am going in search of the gods  
 It will take twelve years, you guard the *betal*?  
 The god of the gate the gods of the boundary,  
 The *betal* stone at Karandewara,"<sup>1</sup>  
 Instructed her friend the Porcupine woman,  
 Instructed Śrī Shek and after him  
 Raṁamoti the striped tigress, and  
 Finally forty five friends Told them all,  
 'Guard my *betal* and my home until I return"  
 She mounted the Sonpakar horse of four legs and two wings,  
 Up went the horse—where came it to earth?  
 Came down on the boundary of Poropatar Bijlpura,  
 Where Pahandi Kupaṛ Lingal was felling the jungle  
 Heaping the wood and setting the heaps on fire  
 The jungle burnt, he sowed rice in the clearing  
 Rice to prepare offerings of food for Gond gods  
 All round the clearing he set hedges of thorn  
 If hares eat the rice he kills them in snares,  
 If mice eat the rice he kills them in traps,  
 He will not allow the rice to be damaged  
 Thus in the morning Lingal told his mother, Hirabai,  
 "I will go and see how is my rice"  
 He fastened his powder horn to his hip, and hung round his  
     neck a case with gun powder  
 Tied a Hanuman scarf round his waist,  
 Stuck two knives into the scarf and then took his gun,  
 The gutar of twelve stops, of silken strings and god flower  
     gourd

<sup>1</sup> Karandewara in the Satmala Hills.

And put his book into his pocket.

What did Jangu Bai, the goddess, turn in her mind?

‘Unmarried is my brother, and unmarried am I,  
I won’t approach him just as I am, but in different guise.’

She formed a silk cocoon like a small vessel

And stuck to a thorny bush.

That same night what animals came?

Perageshri the sambar and Raigesshri the sambar,

Uncle and nephew sambar came from the jungle

The nephew what did he say?—“Uncle what a wonderful  
smell?

“What may it be? This is the smell of a blossoming tree.”

He goes to a tree and smells, but it is not that smell.

He smells another tree, but neither is that the source of  
the smell.

“It is not the smell of a tree in blossom,

“But whate’er it may be, it’s an edible thing and delicious.”

“That is true, son. It’s the rice of Pahandi Kupar Lingal,

“The rice which he offers his gods,” thus he explained to his  
nephew,

“Never mind, let us go and eat just a mouthful, come uncle!”

“Fool, if a hare eats his rice, he ensnares it,

“All round the field is a hedge of thorns,

“Sambar or deer he kills with his gun.”

Then said the nephew: “We’ll stretch our necks over the hedge,

“Standing on stones we’ll leave no track.”

Thus they ate one mouthful of rice after the other.

The uncle ate timidly just a little, but heartily ate the nephew.

The old sambar saw it: “This is the property of your father!”

Struck his horn into the nephew’s flank.

Perageshri vomited a mouthful of rice, and as he

Withdrew his head, saliva dripped down, caught on the hedge,

And full on the stones; from there the saliva drew out in a thread

Over four miles. Under a *pusi* tree the sambar rested, chewing.

Rising next morning, Lingal went to inspect his rice-field.

As he went round the hedge, his eye fell on the thread of saliva.

“What can this be? It looks like the thread of a spider?”

He touched it and found it was sticky

What can it be? —He opened the gate of the hedge.  
And searched inside, saw the saliva and all that the sambar  
had eaten

"Damn it! Sambar have eaten my rice!"

Came out through the door and looked for their tracks,  
But could see no track on the stony ground

Stooping he walks fifty steps, finds on the ground the foot prints  
And follows the track

Nephew sambar was standing and said to his uncle,

"Now he comes he is on our tracks"

'You are too young to die whatever we do he'll not let us  
escape

'Once his gun fires spices for cooking must be kept ready

'Such is Lingal! As thieves we are caught'

But you at least shall survive I'll remain here

What does it matter if I die! Lifting his tail he ran

Pahandi Kupar Lingal saw him, set up his gun rest,

Steadying his gun aimed at the sambar

He fired and the sambar fell dead

Who heard the noise? Lingal's brothers heard it

They were five,—six Lingal included

They said to each other "Our eldest brother has made a  
kill

'Let us go'—So they came, and followed the footprints

"Heh brother! they called, Lingal heard them

They went to him. "What is it brother?"—

"Sambar ate my rice, which I keep as offerings for gods

'One sambar was here, I shot it Cut up the meat and bring  
it

"I'll close the gate and return You follow after"

"First give us fire, brother," his brothers begged him

"My torch has gone out, I have no fire

"But nearby lives old Gaure

"Who has fire in his jungle clearing

"Go, address him as uncle, ask him for fire and bring it

"I shall come after shutting that gate"

One of the brothers went to bring fire.  
 For fire he begged, but Gaure grew angry.  
 "Lest the virtue of my field depart, I won't give the fire."  
 So speaking he lifted his torch of bamboo.  
 The boy was afraid, and came back.  
 "Brother, he won't give me fire."  
 "I'll go myself" said Pahandi Kupar Lingal.

## VI.

*Pahandi Kupar Lingal visits Gaure.*

What did he do? He saw a *palas* tree and went there.  
 Sat down on the edge of the clearing, near the old Gaure.  
 And leant his gun against the tree.  
 Then he took his guitar with twelve stops,  
 What tune did he play? A dance tune he played.  
 Just then seven sisters, the daughters of Gaure came  
 Bringing gruel and a vessel of water; came to the clearing.  
 "Father we have brought your breakfast, come father.  
 "Come and drink gruel, come wash your face."  
 He washed his face, then drank gruel.  
 And as he drank, what sound did he hear?  
 He heard the sound of the guitar with twelve stops.  
 "Ababa, what beautiful music! I feel like dancing."  
 Grasping his bamboo torch, he started dancing.  
 Behind a cloth flap an arm and a half long  
 In front a cloth flap<sup>1</sup> an arm and a half long.  
*Sárap, Sárap, Sárap*, he danced to that tune.  
 His daughters, seeing the father dancing,  
 The seven sisters began to dance too; behind him they danced.  
 As they danced Lingal could not keep serious;  
 He burst out laughing.—"What's that?" said the old man.  
 And then he saw Lingal "Whence did you come Lingal?  
 "And where are you going my boy?"  
 "I came to look at my rice field,

1. Gaure is described as wearing a *langoti*, a long, single piece of cloth drawn in between the legs and tucked into a belt front and back, the loose ends hanging down as flaps. This is still the usual dress of Kolams.

" Sambar have eaten the rice and I followed their track.  
 " I shot one sambar then my brothers came running  
 " But I had no fire nor had my brothers,  
 " So I said ' Go to uncle Gaure and ask him for fire '  
 " He came but you jumped at him, ready to beat him."  
 " No, no one came here, but you saw me dancing  
 " And this makes me embarrassed."  
 " Give me fire uncle ' said Lingal  
 Gaure the old man, ordered his daughter  
 Go bring fire, for Lingal your brother-in-law "  
 Two of them went to the fire, cupping their hands  
 They took fire and gave it to Lingal in the palms of their hands.  
 He took the fire and put it into his scarf  
 Tying it up in a bundle as though he were tying up grain,  
 And threw the fire over his shoulder  
 ' I am going uncle Come and take home some meat "  
 What did the girls say one to another " We have always  
 thought  
 " Much of our inborn power  
 " But he put living coals in his scarf and tied it up  
 ' His power must be great! "  
 Lingal went to the sambar and gave to his brothers the fire,  
 " Cut the meat up and then bring it home, I'll go ahead."

## VII

*Jangu Bai appears to Pahandi Kupar Lingal*

Lingal went to the rice field and walked through the rice,  
 And as he came out his precious turban caught on a thorn  
 of the hedge.

Pahandi Kupar Lingal turned, saw a silk cocoon

" Ababa, what large cocoon is this? " He detached the cocoon  
 And tied it up in his scarf, then shut the gate and turned  
 to go home

His mother saw him " My sons have come! "

So saying she took water in a long necked goblet,  
 Set a brass plate with five arti lights.

With these in her hands she came out as Lingal entered the courtyard.

She put down the footstool and washed his feet.

Then she touched his forehead with new pearls,

Showered him with old pearls, and threw over him

Balls made of millet flour and balls made of dung.

Then she went inside; Lingal followed his mother,

Leant his gun against the wall near the hearth,

And tied to it the powder horn and powder box.

Then he sat down on the cot, and called to his mother.

"Come mother."—"Why son?"—"Have you ever seen

"Such a cocoon? Did father ever bring home one like this?

"See, I found this." He untied the scarf, and put the cocoon in his mother's hand.

"Have you ever seen such a big one?"—"Never son,"

She looked at it from all sides. "I never saw one so big."

"Bring a new pot, mother, we'll put in the cocoon and place it in the god's corner."

Pahandi Kupar Lingal took a bath, ate his dinner, and went to his court.

He had already left when the cocoon burst and

Out came Jangu Bai, as a girl six years old.

A golden swing appeared in the house, and in a hammock of pearls

She began to swing, sat swinging in the hammock.

*Kurr kurr* creaked the swing; what did she say to the mother?

"Mother!" The sight of her dumb-founded the mother,

"What god may this be?"

"God or spirit, what does it matter. My brother is not married

"And neither am I," said Jangu Bai. "How could I look at his face?

"Therefore I came here inside a cocoon.

"Twelve threshing floors of Gond gods were born, what has become of them mother?"

"Your brother may know, I know nothing."

"How do you celebrate the eating of first fruits.

- ' We bring new *sama* millet,<sup>1</sup> and pound it,  
 " Then your brother takes some outside, all six brothers go  
 ' And offer the grain to the gods of the four kin groups  
 ' Then we cook sacrificial food, and your brother  
 " Offers some to the gods of the four kin groups  
 " When he returns we put some food on the roof top  
 " Then the brothers and all the men sit down to their food  
 " Lastly, when they have finished, we women eat too "  
 " Such a rule you observe, and is brother content with that?"  
 At these words, Hiradevi went, took the road to the court house  
 " Heh son! Pahandi Kupar Lingal!" she shouted loudly  
 He rose and came to his mother, standing before her he  
 asked why she had come  
 ' You told me it was a cocoon, but who knows what god or  
 spirit it is!  
 ' Gone is the cocoon, and a girl six years old  
 " Sits and swings in a hammock  
 " About gods she has asked me, and I told her how we  
 celebrate the rite of first fruits.  
 " But she said 'How can he be content with that?'  
 ' If such a rule is observed, where are the gods, does he know?"  
 So he went home He washed in a bucket and  
 Still with wet clothes entered and said " Ram, Ram, oh  
 goddess "  
 There was a curtain and from behind it, she said  
 " Ram, Ram, brother," —Then she spoke to Lingal as she  
 had spoken to the mother  
 " So we must search for the gods, oh brother "  
 Soon I shall go' —For two days he stayed  
 On a Thursday he prepared himself to start  
 Opened a golden box and put on all his ornaments,  
 Tied round his head a precious turban, fastened  
 A powder box to his hip, and hung round his neck a powder  
 horn.  
 In his hand he carried the gun, and to his left side hung his  
 guitar of twelve stops.

<sup>1</sup> *Pancum mūlure*,



Near the navel he wore two knives and a dagger,  
 And into his pocket he put the book from which to read the  
 sacred lore of the Gonds.  
 He went near the curtain: "Ram, Ram, I am going sister."  
 He turned and touched the feet of his mother.  
 Bade farewell to the brothers and told the villagers.  
 "Till I return, may the folk of the village live happily together."

## VIII

*Pahandi Kupar Lingal's Search for the Gond gods.*

Lingal set out—What did he say:  
 "The gods were with Mahadeo, him I shall ask."  
 He went to Mahadeo at Dhauragiri.  
 The court was seated, the court of fifty-six crores of gods.  
 Going up to Shembu, Lingal bade "Ram, Ram."  
 Shembu gave him his blessings: "Whence did you come,  
 Lingal?"  
 "My Gond gods were here with you uncle."  
 "Yes truly, twelve years ago they were here."  
 "But then they said: 'We have our priest,' and went to you."  
 "'We have our katora, let us go to him,' so saying they left."  
 "Where have they gone?"—"That I don't know."  
 "I am going. Ram, Ram, uncle. Ram, Ram, all you gods."  
 So saying Lingal went away.  
 He came down from Dhauragiri, and then—where did he go?  
 He went to Yevdapur, to Kanoba at Yevdapur,  
 Said "Ram, Ram" and asked: "Have my gods been here?"  
 The answer was no.  
 Again he started: where was he to go?  
 "I shall go to Kashi Rameshwar, may be they live there."  
 There too he enquired, but they had not been there.  
 So he started to search the mountains.  
 Searched the north, searched in valleys and hills,  
 But found no trace. So he went south.  
 Searched valleys and hills, but without success.  
 From there he went eastwards and

Searched valleys and hills but found no trace  
 At last he went west, searching valleys and hills  
 Still found no trace of the gods  
 Lingal grew weary Wandering through the four quarters  
 Had tired him out and he retraced his steps to Dhauragun  
 Again he asked Shembu "Have the gods come?"  
 "No," answered Shembu  
 Lingal left and went eastwards, there came upon a white  
*palas* tree  
 Within sight stood a palm tree, one and a half measures high  
 He sought the shade of the *palas* tree  
 Lifted the gun from his shoulder and leant it against the tree  
 Took off his powder case, knife and dagger and put them  
 down near the gun  
 Then spread his scarf in the shade and sat down  
 Through his mind went the thought, 'Now I have roamed  
 for four corners  
 In search of the gods, but have found no trace.  
 What shall I say to Jangu Bai?'  
 Give me a sign of your presence, gods" he prayed, folding  
 his hands in exhaustion  
 'If they were above ground they would appear to me  
 But they are not on the earth, they are invisible  
 I will torture myself and make them appear'  
 He took out his dagger and rested it point upwards,  
 Stood on it on one leg, and folding his hands twiddled around  
 "O gods, show mercy and appear to me, see I endure torture!"  
 Thus Pahandi Kupar Lingal prayed to his gods,  
 Then he stepped down off the dagger,  
 Lay down on it, the point touching his stomach  
 "Give me a sign of your presence," he said  
 Then he grew weary and said "Lingal is beaten"  
 He rose and put the dagger back in its place  
 "The gods cannot be found, now I shall go"  
 He took the book from his pocket and read the lore of the  
 Gond gods.  
 As he read he tuned the guitar with twelve stops.

And began playing the Persa Pen tune,  
 Who heard the tune of the gods?  
 The gods themselves enclosed in the cave.  
 Some were sletping and some were half standing,  
 Without food, without water.—“ Brothers, this is the Persa  
 Pen tune!”

When he had finished the first tune, he played the tune  
 Sora Dhemsa, striking the guitar.

The gods were as dry as a mat, as yellow as prawns.  
 They lacked strength, yet hearing the tune they rejoiced.  
 Those who were sleeping, moved in their sleep.  
 Those who were sitting, swayed as they sat.  
 Those who were standing, danced as they stood.  
 The gods were happy.

Lingal lay still, face upwards and looked at the palm tree.  
 And as the gods danced in the cave, the palm leaves shook gently.  
 ‘ Before, this palm tree did not move.’

Now why does it shake?’ thought Lingal to himself.  
 Putting down the guitar, he rose and went to the palm tree,  
 Close by grew high *sukra* grass.

“ Why is it shaking? I shall soon see when this grass is removed.”

He grasped the grass and tore it out by the roots.

Between the stone slabs appeared cracks.

He knelt down and saw through the cracks the gods looking  
 like stars.

“ What kind of beings are these?” he said to himself.

So he wondered and finally asked them; “ Who are you?”

“ We are the Parenda Khara Koya Wasi Penk.”

“ *Arrē*,” he cried and started beating his chest.

“ Twelve years have I wandered about for your sake.”

“ Who are you then?” inquired the gods,

“ I am your priest.”—“ What luck you have come.

“ Here we are starving, without food, without water; give  
 us something to eat.”

“ What a terrible thing! I have no food.

“ Silver and gold I have, but nothing to eat.

“ What shall I do?” Pahandi Kupa Lingal rose,

Wrapped his turban round his neck, folded his hands and spoke;  
 "O fiery goddess Jangu Bai, appear here at once"

## IX

*The Liberation of the Gond gods*

She heard his prayer and said to herself  
 "It is twelve years today, that the brother left  
 "But never once did he give me a thought  
 "Now at last he recalls me"  
 Riding her flying horse, she came, stood beside Lingal  
 "Brother why have you called me?"  
 "Goddess, today I have found the gods,  
 "No food and no water have they, and they say they are  
     starving  
 'Neither have I any food so I called upon you"  
 She dismounted 'The gods complain they are starving'  
 'What shall we do? I have no food"  
 Jangu Bai made a basket of brinjal flowers  
 Of *pahandi* flowers she plaited the handle  
 To the forest she went to gather wild fruits  
 Collected *chironji*,<sup>1</sup> *biba* and *bel*<sup>2</sup> fruit  
 Fruit of the *selta*<sup>3</sup> and the *kesla*<sup>4</sup> tree  
 With these fruits of the jungle she filled her basket.  
 Then her brother gave the fruit to the gods  
 "O gods, hold out your hands, cup your palms  
 "I'll give you fruit to eat" By handfuls he dealt out the fruit  
 The gods took it, all he gave them, and the gods ate  
 After eating the fruit what did they say?  
 "Now we are thirsting for water, water we want,  
 "O goddess we long for a drink"  
 At once Jangu Bai took golden goblet and silver pad  
 Lifted them on to her head and went for water  
 "If I bring water from tank or well the gods will lose divine  
     virtue  
 "Their virtue must remain unassailed"

1 *Buchanania latifolia*

2 *Aegle marmelos*.

3 *Ocotelea dalbergioides*

4 *Crewia tinctoria*

Where the Penganga flows into the sea, there went the goddess.  
Stood in the water and washed her hands and feet.  
Filled the pitcher and lifted it on to her head.  
Then she returned and gave to her brother the water.  
“Give it to the gods.” Lingal said to the gods;  
“Cup your hands and I’ll give you water; drink.”  
The gods drank and felt happy.  
“Now what should be done? What ruse shall we use to  
set the gods free?”  
“To free them is a difficult task,  
“In this palm tree are two birds, set there to guard the gods.  
“Bendo, the she-bird, and Gohdal the male, in the nest two  
young ones.  
“When you arrived they had gone to fetch food for their  
young.  
“Crossing the sea they flew to bring food of pearls and diamonds.  
“Soon they’ll return, and then they will kill us.  
“Let us discover a way to destroy them.  
“But first let us kill their young.”—“How shall we do it?”  
“Lingal you take this brinjal flower basket and go to the forest,  
“Gather the resin of *wedma* and *serka* trees.”  
He went and collected the resin.  
Then they took a big iron pan  
Poured water from the goblet and put in the resin;  
Placed the pan on a fire and boiled the resin to glue.  
“Now Lingal, take it on your head and climb up,  
“Pour the glue into the mouths of the birds,  
“Up in that branch is their nest.  
“Thinking their parents come to feed them, they’ll swallow  
the glue and die.”  
Thus Jangu Bai instructed Lingal.  
With the pan on his head he climbed up.  
Grasping a branch he stood near the nest but could not quite  
reach.  
“I can’t reach the nest,” said Lingal.  
Then Jangu Bai mounted her flying horse.  
Flew up near Lingal, and halted under the branch.

"Now hold my shoulder, and place your foot in the stirrup"  
 What did he answer "You are my sister,

"I am your brother, a sin it will be, if I grasp your shoulder"  
 "When you come down, I shall teach you the means to blot  
 out the sin"

So he placed his foot on the stirrup, with one hand held  
 Jangu Bai's shoulder,

As he stood there the young birds opened their beaks,  
 He poured the glue into their mouths, the beaks  
 Stuck fast and the birds died

Taking them in his right hand, Lungal threw the birds down.  
 Then he climbed down and Jangu Bai dismounted  
 At once the brother touched her feet

"Tell me! Now how shall it be?" said Lungal

"YOUR AND MY KIN GROUP MIGHT HAVE BEEN  
 ONE,

"BUT HENCEFORTH YOURS SHALL BE PANDWEN  
 SAGA

"AND MINE SHALL BE SARPE SAGA

"THUS IS THE SIN REMOVED"

Now came the parent birds

"Keep ready your arrow! Take aim!"

First came the mother, behind her the father

Lungal held ready the arrow

As she came, what did the mother bird say?

"My children are burnt, my children are killed," so crying,  
*brt, brt*, she flew from afar

"Tell me where is the seat of your life?"

The bird said "My life is in my right wing"

Lungal shot at the wing, the arrow hit and the bird fell down

Lungal grasped his knife and rushed to cut the bird's throat

"Spare my life" cried the bird, "and I'll live on this earth  
 as a bird of omen

"Don't cut my throat,

<sup>1</sup> For a different version of the incident which accounts for the existence of a separate saga of Jangu Bai worshippers see pp. 109-110-284

"Wherever people will go, be it to found a new village,  
 "Be it to ask for a bride, if I pass to their right it will be a  
 good omen ;

"If I fly from left to right, the omen is bad

"And people should abandon that plan."

So saying, she changed into a *tire* bird,

He spared her life, and she flew away.

Then came rushing the bird Juguasghodal.

"Heh, you scoundrel, you have killed my children and robbed  
 me of my wife!"

Then what did Lingal say?

"Where is the seat of your life?"

"My life is in my left wing."

Then Lingal released an arrow and the bird fell to the ground.

Grasping his knife to cut the bird's throat Lingal rushed  
 forward.

What did the bird say?—"My Rani's life you have spared,

"Spare my life too. On this earth I will be a *chaichal* bird,

"If I pass to the right side it is a good omen

"If I pass to the left side the omen is bad.

"If I cross the path, you should not go on."

Thus all obstacles were overcome.

"Now the gods must be freed.

"How, shall we free them?"

"Tell the gods to strike at the rock of the cave,

"Brother, tell the seven brothers to strike."

They struck the rock of the cave from below,

*Khannanna* it rung, but the rock did not move.

Again they struck. "The rock does not yield."

"Never mind brother, tell the five brothers to strike."

He called upon them. "Strike at the rock!"

The five brothers struck and struck once again

As they struck, the rock of the cave gave way.

The five brothers, striking, came out.

Behind them the six *wen*<sup>1</sup> came out.

1. It is noteworthy that here for the first time in this version the imprisoned Gond gods are described as *wen* and not as *pen*.

On all fours the six *wen* emerged,  
 Like cats crawled out the seven *wen*,  
 Came catlike crawling forth  
 After them the four *wen* came out,  
 The dividers of all, the four *wen* came out,  
 Four caves,<sup>1</sup> four rites, four brother *sale*,  
 Four corner stones, four thrones,  
 Four flags, four *munda posts*,  
 The gods<sup>2</sup> gathered in one place  
 What did Jangu Bai say?—"Brother, I leave you  
 "You take the gods to Poropatar Dhanegaon"  
 With these words, the goddess departed  
 What did the gods say? "Bhupia,<sup>3</sup> we have starved for  
     twelve years  
 'Only leaves have we eaten.'  
 Lingal told the gods, "Make ready Rest for a while and  
     recover'  
 Taking an arrow he drew a circle around them.  
 'Do not cross this line' Beware'  
 "I'll go to god Shembu to ask about food,  
 "He may tell us what you should eat, I am going"

## X

*Pahandi Kupar Lingal meets Bhart Raja*

Then Lingal went to the nine walled Dhauragiri,<sup>4</sup>  
 Went to the Court and stood at the door of Dhauragiri  
 Pahandi Kupar Lingal greeted Sri Shembu with "Ram, Ram,"  
 "Be blessed," said Shembu, "from whence have you come?"  
 "I have found my gods, but tell me what food shall they eat?"  
 "Why did you free them? They might well have remained

1 Cf Footnote 1 on p. 120

2 Here the word *penk* (gods) is used again.

3 Bhupia is identical with Katora or clan priest. Lingal is often referred to as the *katora* of the Parenda Khata Koya Wasi Peak.

4 Here the teller of the story inserted, as many Pardhans do, the story of a quarrel between the god Nardama and Beramdeo, which comes before Shembu Mahadeo's court, and is decided in favour of Nardama upon the advice of Bhart Raja. Lingal is only a spectator and the story has no bearing on the fate of the Gond gods, except in so far as it justifies the wisdom of Bhart Raja. It has been omitted.



"Of their food I'll say nothing; go to him who sits in the  
 "Mango grove." Lingal turned and went to Bhart Raja.  
 Just then Bhart Raja massaged the legs of his wife.  
 "What can he say?" Lingal said nothing.  
 Why should he greet him Ram Ram—he stood there in silence.  
 "Who are you?" asked Bhart Raja.  
 "I am Pahandi Kupa Lingal" he said.  
 "What thoughts do you turn in your mind?"  
 "He who massages a woman's feet, what can he say?"  
 Pahandi Kupa Lingal kept silent.  
 "Why did you come to me Lingal?"  
 "I freed the gods and went to god Shembu,  
 "To ask him where to get food for the gods.  
 "But he only replied: 'Go to him who sits in the mango  
 grove.'"  
 "I will tell you, but first go to the west and then return here."  
 Lingal went and saw how a cow gave birth to a calf;  
 The calf, hardly born, began licking the cow and the cow  
 drank from the calf.  
 Lingal saw it: "*Abbabba*, what a scandalous thing.  
 "A cow suckling a calf I have seen,  
 "But never a calf suckling a cow."  
 Lingal returned and told of the cow and the calf.  
 "Now go to the east and come back again."  
 He went and what did he see? A colt one year old.  
 Plucking *garka* grass with his mouth, but eating it by way  
 of the rectum.  
 "What an extraordinary thing! Eating by mouth I have seen,  
 "But eating by the rectum I have never yet seen.  
 "What an extraordinary thing!"  
 From there he returned and told of the colt.  
 "Now go to the south and then return."  
 He went and saw two silk cotton trees and between them a wire.  
 Seven large hills swung, suspended from the wire.  
 "*Abbabba*, a hairlike wire, and below it an army of thousands,  
 "If the wire should break and the hills fall down, that army  
 will die.

"This is indeed an extraordinary thing" He turned and went back

And told of the hills that swung

"Now go to the north There what strange thing did he see?"

Sixty pots and one well of dressed stone,

The water of sixty pots was poured into one pot

And yet the pot was not filled

All pots were of equal size Water from one pot was

Poured into six, yet some water remained

Lingal saw it "Abbabba, what an extraordinary thing!"

"All the pots are one size" Lingal returned and told what he had seen

Bhart Raja said "You blamed me for massaging the legs of my wife,

"But in this world a man's love for his wife is greatest, his love for his parents is less

"You went westwards and saw the cow and the calf

"In this world children will teach their parents, parents, will drink of the wisdom of children

"You went eastwards and saw the colt eating through his rectum,

"Thus in the world will men take their mouth full,

"But called to a council of five will hide their great words in shame

"You went to the south and saw mountains on strings,

"Thus in this world great kingdoms will hang on the edicts inscribed on thin paper

"You went to the north and saw the one pot fill sixty pots to the brim.

"Thus in this world parents will lavish love on children and grandchildren.

"But all children and grandchildren together will bestow less love on the parents"

Finally Bhart Raja said

"Pabandi Kupa Lingal, where are the gods?"

He saddled the horse, ate some food,

Then started to go to the gods

He lifted a basket on to the head of his wife,

And made his parents sit on the horse.

He himself carried the cot in his hand, and held the horse's bridle.

"Come on, where are your gods? I'll show you what food they shall have."

He walked behind, his horse went in front.

What did Bhart Raja say to Pahandi Kupaṅg Lingal?

"Among all these trees, which is the greatest?"

Lingal looked searchingly round, saw a tall palm tree.

"The palm tree is greatest."—"No Lingal" said Bhart Raja.

"You say so because it looks tall, but it is not the greatest.

"The mahua<sup>1</sup> tree is the greatest Lingal.

"Gold is obtained through it, liquor distilled

"Thereby wealth is gained through the mahua.

"Of all the trees, that is the greatest.

"Of all the forces which force is the greatest?"

Lingal was thinking. "Of all forces, the greatest is the force of the elephant."

"No Lingal, of all the forces, the force of the wind is the greatest;

"Trees and hills it upsets and scatters.

"Now of all terrors which is the greatest?"

"Of all terrors the tiger is the most terrible."

"No, Lingal, of all terrors small-pox is the greatest.

"Men die, the doors of houses close,

"Of all terrors that is the greatest.

"How many are you gods, the gods of the four kin-groups?

"For the gods of the seven *wen*, there shall be seven puja.

"And one in front, in the middle;

"For the gods of the six *wen* there shall be six puja.

"And one in front, in the middle.

"For the gods of the five *wen*, there shall be five puja.

"And one in front in the middle.

"For the gods of the four *wen* there shall be four puja.

1. *Bassia latifolia*.

"And one in front in the middle"<sup>1</sup>  
 So talking they went, came near to the gods,  
 As they approached, Bhart Raja explained what food they  
     should have  
 Sweet wheat bread sugar and pulse that was to be the god's  
     food  
 Then he told Lingal "The chicken  
 "For the sacrifice must be cut upwards, into two halves"  
 And he said, 'Give them young cows'  
 They went nearer, nearer the gods,  
 Swaying the gods rose, "Our priest  
 Brings us something to eat"  
 They devoured the horse, finishing it completely

## XI

*Anasrar.*

"Oh gods now let us go to Dhanegaon" said Pahandi Kupar  
     Lingal  
 'Let us go, oh priest', they started "Great is our hunger"  
 Walking, walking, where did they go?  
 They came to Kailas Dip Who was there?  
 The son of Bhui Lakshmi, Raja Sirar, the King of the peasants  
 They went to a mango grove  
 "Stay here, gods, remain in the mango grove,  
 "While I ask for your food"  
 He went to Anasrar "Ram, Ram, Sirar"  
 "Whence did you come, Lingal?"  
 "My gods have been shut in a cave,  
 "To feed them, give me provisions"  
 "I'll give you provisions, but only for cash"  
 "I have not a single pice with me"  
 "Then leave something with me  
 Leave a gold bracelet, or your silver belt"  
 "Why should I leave anything?"

<sup>1</sup> This refers to the numbers of heaps of crushed millet or rice which are offered at every sacrificial rite in honour of the clan-deities seven, ten, five or four in a row and one in front of it nearest the worshipper Cf p. 275

Pahandi Kupaṛ Lingal went outside folded his hands,  
Whom did he invoke?

"Hail fiery Jangu Bai, come here this hour.

"I am in trouble."—She heard his call

"Why should he call me?" So she made ready,  
Mounted the flying horse and came.

"Why did you call me, brother?"

"The gods say they are hungry, sister.

"So I came to Sirar to ask for provisions.

"But he asked me to pay him in cash.

"Or to leave him a golden bracelet or silver belt.

"This, Anasirar wants to keep as a pawn.

"I would not give it, and called upon you,"

"If that is the case, give me as pawn to Anasirar.

"Take away the foodstuff."

Letting Jangu Bai go ahead, he went to Anasirar.

"Ram, Ram, Sirar, I won't leave an ornament,

"But I'll leave my sister as pawn.

"Now give me provisions."—"All right. It will do."

Taking a measure he entered his store house,

Pahandi Kupaṛ Lingal called the gods and they came.

"Spread out your turbans to receive the provisions."

With a *seer* measure, he dealt out provisions.

To each god eight *seer* of rice, two *seer* of wheat flour.

In this way he gave eight *seer* of rice to each god of the four  
kin-groups.

Gave them also sugar and ghee; they tied it into bundles  
And took from him earthen cooking pots; then they departed.  
Anasirar kept the girl as pawn.

"Remain in this storehouse and sit in the swing!"

For five hours she stayed. To feed the Gond gods

The rice in the store basket was emptied a foot and a half.

The pulse had shrunk by a foot and a half.

The vessels of ghee had been half depleted.

Sugar and wheat flour had all been reduced.

All this Jangu Bai replenished in full.

The vessels with ghee overflowed  
 All stores were replenished and doubled  
 After five hours she went away  
 From a distance Anasirar saw her going  
 "Is this woman a stranger?" said Anasirar, and went to the  
 storehouse  
 He entered and there there was no one.  
 But he saw that his storehouse was filled to bursting  
 Saw that all had been doubled  
 'Who may that be? Perhaps it was Jangu Bai who has filled  
 my storehouse  
 "Oh! I have gravely erred!"  
 He went outside and washed with a whole pot of water  
 Then folding his hands and wrapping his turban round the  
 neck  
 He asked for forgiveness 'Keeping you as a pawn  
 'I have greatly sinned, pray forgive me my fault"  
 The goddess was aware of the prayer  
 What shape did she take?  
 In the shape of a bee she spoke into Sirar's right ear  
 "Do not ask money of Pahandi Kupar Lingal,  
 'I have replenished your goods"  
 Then she went to Poropatar Bijlipura

## XII

### *The Crossing of the River*

The gods went to the river and bathed  
 Afterwards they built hearths,  
 The gods of three *lin* groups cooked in one place,  
 Seven *uen*, six *wen*, five *uen*, cooked in one place,  
 Boiled rice in water and added milk and ghee,  
 Their food was soon cooked  
 But the four brothers did not finish their cooking  
 In ghee they cooked their rice, let it simmer  
 Then took some to taste. It was not cooked  
 It was still quite raw

The gods of three kin groups made leaf plates,  
And began to eat their meal.

"Have you finished or not, brothers?"

"Our rice is only half cooked."

"We have eaten our food; when will you finish?"

The gods went away, took the road to Dhanegaon and  
With them went Pahandi Kubar Lingal.

But the rice of the four brothers would not cook.

Just at that time clouds gathered

And further upstream it rained; the river began to swell.

They too prepared leaf plates. "This is no good.

"Now let us eat; up there clouds are gathering.

"If it rains there will be floods; let us hurry."

They put the food on the plates, the rice made a grating  
noise, *sarar sarar*,

They tasted and it cracked *kutur kutur*; it was still half cooked.

"What shall we do?" The river was rising,

The water came down in flood

They gathered the leaf plates and sitting on an ant-hill,  
poured in the rice.

From the pots they poured in the rice.

Into what did it turn? It turned into white ants.

To remain as a sign of the four brothers.

When this was done, the river was in full flood.

"Let us go, brothers!"—They were seized by the flood.

"Brothers, our kin-group is drowning, the four brother folk  
are drowning."

*Pong, pong*, they were swept away. Who then emerged?

Dāme, the tortoise came to the surface.

"*Arere!* brothers you'll be gone; sit on my back,

"I'll carry you across the river." They sat on his back.

"What reward will you give me, brothers?"

"We of the four brother folk will not eat you,

"We'll call you divine brother."

Carrying them he dived into deep water.

Oh brothers, he tried to drown them, but as he dived they  
escaped.

Then who emerged? Puse, the crocodile  
 "Where are you going brothers? Come to me,  
 "I'll carry you safely across." They went to him,  
 And they sat on his shoulders  
 "Tell me, what reward will you give me?"  
 "We will call you divine brother and respect you,  
 "Our kin group will give you offerings"  
 But he too dived, and took them under the water  
 The worst had happened, the four brothers were drowning  
 But once more they escaped and were caught by the current.  
 Then who appeared? Kisti, the monkey with the red mouth  
 Standing on a tuft of grass, which made it appear he was  
     wearing a skirt.  
 He cut a *pirur* creeper, and threw it,  
 "Brothers catch it" He threw  
 The four caught hold of the creeper, and he pulled  
 What did Kisti, the monkey say  
 "Tell me, what shall be my reward?"  
 "Among us four brothers, we will call you small brother,  
 "We'll make you one of us and pay you respect  
 "The field you abandon that we won't till  
 'The wife you divorce her we won't marry  
 "If we do, the sin will be ours."  
 'Promise, or I'll cut the creeper"  
 "All this respect we will show you"

## XIII

*The Gond gods settle at Dhanegaon*

The three kin groups reached Dhanegaon,  
 Dhanegaon of the light forest of *anjon* trees,<sup>1</sup>  
 Dhanegaon of the dense forest of *anjon* trees,  
 Dhanegaon of the forest where *bor* fruit ripens,  
 Dhanegaon of the forest of fig trees,  
 Dhanegaon where rice needs no husking, where pulse needs  
     no grinding,

<sup>1</sup> *Hardwickia binata*.



Dhanegaon on the stony hill with the shrines,  
Below it Small Dhanegaon.

The wives are to live in Small Dhanegaon.

The gods are to live at Poropatar Dhanegaon on the hills.

But the gods knew not how to build proper houses,  
They built only huts close to the ground,<sup>1</sup>

Gods of three kin-groups were there,

They worked hard, sowing *sama*<sup>2</sup> and *bari*<sup>3</sup>

And reaped their crops. After the harvest

They said: "Let us go and fetch them, brothers."

They went to bring the four brothers.

"Ram, Ram."—"Damn you, you went ahead.

While we were all but swept away by the river,

Thanks to our luck, we won through."

"Now we have come to take you with us.

"Without you all our work is held up."

"What work is there to do?"

"We will treat you with honour."

"What privileges will you grant us?"

"Be it in the council of five, be it in the *darbar*,

"In every court and in every dispute over wealth

"We will respect your word.

" 'Let us go to the four,' people will say,

"Even though you may not be there,

"In your name alone will judgement be passed."

"You are liars," they said, and would not listen;

"Ram, Ram," they bade and turned to go.

The gods of three-kin groups touched their heads:

"We are at fault for going ahead, but come now,

"Without you the houses cannot be completed.

"The seven stood at seven points, but the plan for the house  
could not be made.

"The six stood at six points, but the plan for the house could  
not be made

1. Shelters without walls with the roof coming right down to the ground; Kolams still build such huts in temporary settlements.

2. *Panicum miliare*.

3. *Eleusine coracana*.

"The five stood at five points, but could not make the plan  
for the house

"Therefore with coaxing words we pray you to come "

So they all went.

When the four brothers stood at four points

The plan of a square for the house was made.

#### XIV

##### *The Marriage of the Gond gods*

There they lived, and twelve years passed

They acquired wealth, had gold, silver houses and food

Rice and pulse filled large store baskets

"Our store is filled, but we have no wives

Hear Pahandi Kupaṛ Lāṅgal, we have no wives

"You must wed us."

"Your marriage I'll solemnize gladly, but where are the girls?

"Go and search for brides "

"We will start at once." The gods of four kin groups

Began to wander and roam the whole world

Those who had daughters what did they say?

"Who are you?"—"We are the Gond gods."

"Who is your mother?"—"Our mother is Kalikankali "

"And your father?"—"We do not know "

'We will not give you our daughters"—They returned

"What has happened?" asked Pahandi Kupaṛ Lāṅgal

'We roamed the whole world, but those who had daughters

"Asked for our mother We told them the name of our mother

"Told them that she is Kalikankali " Then they said

" 'Tell me the name of your father '—' We don't know, ' "

we said

"So we returned "

"Now what shall I do?" said Pahandi Kupaṛ Lāṅgal

"Let us go to god Shembu "

The gods of the four kin groups and Pahandi Kupaṛ Lāṅgal

Went to god Shembu and stood there with folded hands.

'Why have you come? Pahandi Kupaṛ Lāṅgal, why have  
you brought your gods? '

"My gods say: 'How shall our lineage continue?"

"We are unmarried; perform our marriage."

"Well then perform it," answered god Shembu.

"'We cannot find brides' say the gods oh Shembu."

"If they can't find brides, what shall I do?" said Shembu.

"Tell us where girls can be found.

"We roamed the whole world, but could find no brides."

'Whom shall I give you to help search for girls?"

Thought Bhagwan; these were the gods whom he had shut  
in the cave.

Having made them suffer, he must now reveal the truth.

Who was working for Shembu?

Sudhamuni, Budhamuni, Hiramuni, Sukamuni.

They are the sons of Parbhu, their mother is Rameshwar Bai,  
So Shembu Mahadeo told Hiramuni to go.

"Where to?"—"To the palace, to the Parenda Khara  
Gond gods."

"And wherefore?"—"To help them in the search for brides."

Then what did god Shembu say to Pahandi Kupa Lingal?

"I am sending him. Your gods are in trouble.

"But tell me first, what privilege and reward will they give him?"

What did the gods say to Pahandi Kupa Lingal?

"If he finds us brides and solemnizes our marriage,

"We will give him marriage dues.

"Sons and daughters will be born to us,

"At their weddings they will give him bride-dues and

"Dues for the milk of a bride's mother.

"When a girl remarries he will get his due,

"And if a wife runs off he'll get divorce dues."

Then they came to Dhanegaon, bringing Hira with them.

Then where did the gods and Pahandi Kupa Lingal go?

They went to nine-walled Patal Dip.

What sage lived there?—Sonkhastar Guru.

To him they went and bade Ram, Ram.

What did Hiramuni say? "Guru, our gods want to wed.

"Show us where we may find them brides."

There are some girls but it will not be easy to get them  
 Daughters of Patal Shek, daughters of Raja Shek,  
 ' Daughters of Sri Shek daughters of Shek Bojun  
 These four Shek have daughters  
 If you ask for the girls in marriage, the Shek will not give them  
 You must sing and dance to draw the girls out"  
 But how to do this? —The sage made a *para* drum,  
 One *wete* drum and one *gumela* drum,  
 Taught the gods how to play them and  
 To dance the Dandari of Diwali  
 He taught them how to click the dance sticks  
 Taught them *gumela* music and the music of songs,  
 Within a fortnight they learnt how  
 To dance Dandari dances and *gumela* dances  
 Now make yourself ready! —They went to the *darbar*  
 Tuned all their drums and gathered the dancers.  
 They played joyous music.  
 The girls came out to see the spectacle  
 What trickery did the sage teach the gods?  
 When I whistle, each catch hold of one girl '  
 They began to dance, a perfect *gumela* dance a perfect *para*  
 dance  
 Great fun it was to see the dance, and all girls came out to  
 watch.  
 When all were there the sage gave the sign  
 Immediately each god caught one girl, there were  
 Twenty two gods of the four *kan* groups and  
 Each of the twenty two captured one girl  
 Then the sage Sonkhastar, Hiranman and Pahandi Kupa  
 Lingal  
 Solemnized the marriages on the spot  
 The girls' fathers came and shouted  
 You rascals, what are you doing? Have you done it already? '  
 Yes we have done it already But do not grieve  
 ' In the future these gods will be rajas,  
 Their names will be famous  
 Then they made off and took their wives to Dhanegaon

The gods dwelt at Great Dhanegaon on the high ground,  
Below in Small Dhanegaon dwelt their wives.

## XV

### *The Gond gods obtain Persa Pen.*

"Now we need *sale*!"<sup>1</sup> To fetch them  
The gods went beyond sixty seas to an island.  
There they went but they could not bring *sale*.  
The heat burnt their bodies,—the *sale* would not let them  
approach.  
So they returned and told Hiranman:  
"They would not let us approach."  
But Pahandi Kubar Lingal had the book of the Gonds' Great  
God,  
And he gave it to Hiranman, the sage.  
What then did Hiranman do? He took a spear and a fiddle  
What did he say to the gods?  
"Take one pot of mahua liquor, and take a cow."  
They went to the island beyond sixty seas and  
Hiranman played eighteen tunes, twelve melodies in sixteen  
keys,  
He played the tunes for the *sale*, who hearing the music were  
pleased.  
They were in the midst of the water in a temple of gold.  
The father Persa Pen, the four sons, the *sale*,  
Enticed by the tune they came out.  
At once the Gond gods gave them liquor, pure and strong,  
Then slaughtered and gave them the cow.  
Pleased was Persa Pen and so were the *sale*.  
"To take you with us, we have come," said Hiranman.  
"You say, you won't come, but we will render you worship."  
"In the months of Bhawe and Pus and at  
"Dassera we will worship you.  
"We'll take you to the sea to bathe,  
"For your food we will sacrifice cows.

1. *Sal* is a spear-head used as the sacred symbol of the Persa Pen or 'Great god' of a Gond clan.

"Four kin groups, four priests and four Pardhans  
 "Will gather to celebrate your rites"

Then they took the Brother Spearheads to Dhanegaon and  
 Pahandi Kupar Lingal called the fifty six crores of gods,  
 Invited god Shembu and spoke

If they are to live in this world the Gond gods must be  
 given estates '

"What have you in mind Lingal?" said Shembu,  
 'Give them whatever estates you choose"

Then they celebrated the rites, the rites of the Brother  
 Spearheads

The four brothers for one Brother Spearhead

The five brothers for one Brother Spearhead

The six brothers for one Brother Spearhead

The seven brothers for one Brother Spearhead

Mahadeo took four rice grains, and

Gave them as offerings to the four kin groups

The rice vanished and became eggs

The four eggs he placed on four altars,

The four eggs burst and vanished

And four black cocks appeared

These he sacrificed to the gods as *palehar* chicken.

Then he gave offerings of food, and told them the names  
 of their estates.

The name of the seven brothers' estate

Apachimeri Tupachukert, Kakasghadola

Gold silver Madola, Satiasrela Motiadjela

Sonpakar Wajwarbhiri, Golden Ghipota

Bhase Dongur Hill, Bhurmal Hill, seventy seven

Bhourjarmachua this is the name of the

Seven brothers estate

The name of the six brothers' estate

Chachnal Gadial, Pelkinar Permi

Jamtokorvelikinagur, that is the six brothers' estate

The name of the five brothers' estate

In view on a plain Gudmasur Patera,

In view behind Sardur Patera

The name of the four brothers estate:  
 Kelchar Bamni; where without husbands the women conceive,  
 Where without bulls cows are in calf.  
 The shining Ramtek Bamni where the millet stalks rustle.  
 After the fifty six crores of gods had performed the rites,  
 Those who lived there returned to mount Dhauragiri  
 Then the Gond gods went from Dhanegaon to their  
 Own estates and built there villages,  
 And with them they took their god.<sup>1</sup>

## XVI

*The Origin of the Sarpe Sage.*

Pahandi Kupaṅg Lingal returned after twelve years,  
 Came to Poropatar Bijlipura, where in the swing sat Jangu Bai.  
 "Ram, Ram, Bai."—"What have you been doing brother?"  
 "To the Four kin-groups I gave their estates, and they have  
     gone."  
 "Have you not kept one to serve my cult?"  
 "What shall I do, oh sister?"  
 "If one is taken from among the seven, only six would be left.  
 "If one is taken from among the six, only five would be left.  
 "If one is taken from among the five, only four would be left.  
 "If one is taken from among the four, only three would be left.  
 "From where shall I take one?"  
 "For full twelve years I struggled for the sake of my cult.  
 "Yet you gave none for my service.  
 "How could you forget, oh brother!"  
 In the flash of a moment she leapt from the swing.  
 Mounted her flying steed and started;  
 What did she say to herself;  
 "How can I return to my house empty handed?  
 "To the nine-walled Dauragiri I'll go."  
 She rode to the nine-walled Dauragiri and found  
 God Shembu and fifty-six crores of gods sitting in court.

1. While the Gonds are here still referred to as Parenda Khara Koya Penk, the "god" whom they took with them is simply referred to as Raitar.

"Ram Ram," she greeted, "Ram, Ram, sister," they answered,

"All these days you never came, what has happened

"To bring you here?" asked Mahadeo

"I need a priest for my cult, therefore I have come

"Wherever he may be, give him to me."

At once he summoned Brahmadev,

"Open the book, seven yards wide and nine yards long, the  
book of all births

"Find out where is the priest of Jangu Bai"

He opened the book and searched, but the whole day passed  
and he searched in vain.

Two days passed while Brahmadev searched in the book

But the priest of Jangu Bai could not be found

On the fifth day at last, he found the word,

The striped and clawed tiger his father, Raia Moti the mother  
In the palace is Raia Moti thus said the book.

'To them a boy will be born, in your palace Parandoli

"Now the nine months are full and the child is about to be born

Now go," said the book

Then god Shembu told Jangu Bai

"Your priest will be born in Parandoli, your seat"

"Is it truth or a falsehood?" asked Jangu Bai

'The book never lies,' said god Shembu

"He will truly be born, go now, Ram, Ram, mother"

"Ram, Ram oh gods, I am going"

She went and alighted at Parandoli

Dismounted but did not enter her house

Instead she went to the house of Raia Moti,

And said "Will he be yours or mine?"

"Neither yours nor mine will he be"

Nine months and nine hours were full

And a boy was born to Raia Moti

"I have just born a son, oh goddess"

"Bring him here," said Jangu Bai and undid her golden *sari*

She wrapt up the boy and took him to bathe

In the deep pool Sungankasa



On the fifth day she performed the birth rite under a mango tree.

She brought up the boy, and he grew to manhood within twelve years.

When he was to be married, so that sons and daughters  
Might continue his lineage,

Jangu Bai took the boy to Asasurkota.

There ruled the Raja Maravi Gajba

And his daughter was Gadal Somo.

Jangu Bai left the boy in the garden and told him

"If people ask you tell them 'I am a Gond Raja.'

"If they ask your clan, tell them you are of Sarpe Saga."

Then she went and left him.

The Raja's men saw him and asked: "Who are you boy?"

"I am a Gond Raja of Sarpe Saga," he told them,

For Jangu Bai had taught him wisdom.

The men brought the news to the Raja.

"In the mango grove is a Gond boy of Sarpe Saga.

"The boy is as handsome as a god.

"But whether he is god or man we know not."

When the Raja heard this, he went to see for himself.

Truly there was the boy, as handsome as a god.

The Raja said to his men: "He is a good looking boy.

"And would be just right for my daughter."

Then they asked him, who was his god, and

The boy replied: "My god is the fiery Jangu Bai."

The Raja told his men: "Take him by the hand and bring

him to me."

So they took him and led him to the Raja's palace.

Then they brought two pots of marriage liquor.

And offered a cup to the boy.

But he said: "I do not drink, for my god does not drink,

"But you, all who have gathered may drink."

Thus the wedding rites started.

The boy's name was Jalai Jakal, Jalpati Jakal.

Gadal Somo was married to him, and

The wedding rites took five and five days.

The son in law took over the rule of the kingdom  
 But the father in law retained the throne  
 Gadal Somo gave birth to a son Aypati Singal,  
 After him to Gajpati, then to Bhuapati,  
 And at last to Todumari Singh  
 Four sons there were, and all the four  
 Were married to girls of Maravi clan  
 To the daughters of Sri Shek they were married  
 The eldest daughter's name was Shekalpolo  
 The others were called Shekalrambho, Shekalsiro and Shekaltaro  
 From Shekalpolo's womb were born Tumram, the eldest,  
 After him Rai Siram and after that Kodapa  
 From the womb of Shekalrambho, were born Rajaghar  
 Salam and  
 After him Portghar Sonbhar Veti  
 From the womb of Shekalsiro were born  
 Sri Wagdev Marapa and Sri Jangdev Here Kumra,  
 From Shekaltaro's womb was born Tari Mandari.<sup>1</sup>

## XVII

*The War between the Sarpe Saga Gonds and the Manas*

Thus eight houses were founded  
 From them eight brothers took their families  
 And went to Pochendra Hura Parpatgarh  
 There they built houses and cultivated fields and gardens.  
 What symbols did they put up for Jangu Bai?  
 A jawari millet ear of gold, weighing seven maunds.  
 A stalk of silver weighing seven maunds.  
 Mirgao, the spear seven yards long  
 Then they erected two pointed pillars  
 And the eight brothers performed the rites of the spear Mirgao  
 At the end they tied the spear with a hair rope to a *dondera* tree.  
 Thereafter twelve years passed, and they forgot the cult of  
 their god

<sup>1</sup> Tum am, Rai S am, Kodapa Salam, Ven Marapa, Here Kum a and Mandari are the eight clans of the Sarpe Saga

No rites were performed in her honour.  
 What then did Tumram, the eldest do?  
 He went to the liquor vendor Jami and drank liquor.  
 By his example all learnt to drink.  
 Then they went hunting, ate meat and fat  
 And drank strong liquor.  
 For their god they cared nothing.<sup>1</sup>  
 The goddess grew angry; whose shape did she take?  
 She took the shape of a Brahmin. To whom did she go?  
 She went to the Manas of eighty scores  
 And told them mischievous lies.  
 Told them that the brothers of Sarpe Saga were dangerous  
     scoundrels,  
 Told them that Tumram, the eldest had a daughter,  
 Dama Moti Kania, whom they should capture.  
 That they should rob the two pointed posts  
 And all the god's ritual objects.  
 Thus she gave them mischievous advice and then went away.  
 But the Manas made ready and set out for Pochendra Hura  
     Parpatgarh.  
 When they arrived the eight brothers were hunting;  
 In broad daylight the Manas captured Dama Moti Kania,  
 Carried off the two pointed posts  
 And kept them in their own house.  
 Kept Dama Moti in the upper floor and with her the two  
     pointed posts.  
 As they carried them off, crying and wailing  
 Rose from the village of Pochendra Hura Parpatgarh.  
 When the hunters came home and rested their loads on the  
     village border,  
 They heard the cries and wails in the village.  
 "What noise can that be? Listen brothers."  
 There were cries and wails.  
 "Let us go!" They left their loads and went to the village.  
 "Heh! Fools." shouted their wives, "what is your game?"

1. The deity whose cult is neglected is referred to alternatively as Raitar and pen, but it seems obvious that both these terms stand for Jangu Bai.

"Your strong liquor and your meat and fat, let it burn!"  
 Then their wives told them, how the eighty score Manas  
 Robbed Dama Moti and the two pointed posts  
 Then at last they remembered their god  
 And they lighted dried cow dung, washed their hands and  
 their feet

Went to the Spear Mirgao put incense on the fire  
 The god possessed Fumram (and spoke through his mouth)  
 No one is guilty of robbery,  
 I Jangu Bai have done this'

They took up the god and beating a drum went to the Penganga  
 Oh goddess, they prayed, they robbed our daughter  
 and the two pointed posts'<sup>1</sup>

The goddess said Don't be afraid, I am coming with you"  
 Thus spoke Jangu Bai and beating the drum they went on  
 On the bank of the river they halted, and when they were  
 ready to cross

Who appeared on the opposite side?  
 Riding an elephant came the Raja of eighty score Manas  
 Frightened by the sound of the drum, the elephant turned  
 What did the Mana say

"The Gonds have made a drum of wood,

'Of iron they have made a god

'My elephant refuses to drink

We shall give them a beating, from head to heel we will  
 beat them"

The Gonds heard him 'From head to heel we shall

"Beat them, of wood the drum, of iron the god, so said  
 the Mana"

"What shall we do? Between flows the river,

'There is no way to cross Let our Sarpe Saga be drowned!

"Shouting *tsahohoi* we'll jump into the river'

"There is no way to cross. Let our Sarpe Saga be drowned!"

They jumped and the water reached only up to their knees

They crossed and broke into the Manas' town.

<sup>1</sup> In this passage it is very clear that *post* (translated by god) means the sacred symbols which are carried to the Penganga, whereas *Rastar* (translated by goddess) is Jangu Bai worshipped under those symbols.

Called out to Dama Moti, and from the upper storey she replied.  
 Bringing the two posts with her, the girl returned home.  
 She was led away, but Here Kumra and Marapa  
 Remained behind in the town.

They stole two small Mana boys and carried them off in  
 their arms.

They came to the Penganga and hid the boys under a basket.

To their brothers they told naught of the boys.

At the ritual place they erected the sacred symbols,

Then went to the village and brought

Vermilion, incense, goats, cows and cocks.

Returned to the feast place and Tumram performed the rites;

They sacrificed what they had brought, and then said to

Here Kumra and to Marapa: "You two stay here and cook

The food for the offerings, we will go to the village and

Perform the rites for the *sati*."<sup>1</sup>

So saying they went, and Here Kumra and Marapa

Brought the Mana boys and sacrificed them before the god.

But the Mana army advanced and surrounded the feast place.

"Their god and their daughter they might have taken;

"But why did they steal our boys?"

So saying the Manas came to give battle.

Here Kumra and Marapa, seeing themselves surrounded

Were struck with terror and trembling prayed to the god.

What did Marapa say?

"Hail Raitar, I'll never eat goat again, though sheep I will eat.

"This will be my punishment, but now save my life.

"May the boy's head vanish, and the head of a goat appear."

So praying he fell on his knees.

What did Here Kumra pray?

"Hail Raitar, I will eat neither sheep nor goat,

"Let there be the head of a goat, and the head of a sheep.

"Now we go to meet the army!"

With these words he covered the heads with his shawl

And the boys' heads changed into heads of goat and sheep.

1. The deified ancestors, Cf. p. 292.

The Manas came and stood before the gods,  
 "You have sacrificed our boys to your god"  
 "No, we have not," replied the two  
 They drew away the shawl, and see!  
 "Have a look what heads we have here"  
 The heads of a goat and a sheep were there  
 Marapa said "You have belied us"  
 Anger seized him and across the river he chased the Mana  
 host.  
 Then he returned to the feast place and started cooking the  
 food for the offerings.  
 While he was cooking the brothers returned from the village  
 Where they had worshipped the *sati*  
 Then Here Kumra and Marapa told how the Manas  
 Had come to cut off their heads  
 'Why did they come?'—"That we have not yet revealed,  
 We brought from the Manas two boys to sacrifice to our god,  
 And they came for revenge  
 We stood before the god and swore never again to eat of  
 a goat or a sheep,  
 'Then the boys' heads vanished, and the heads of goat and  
 sheep appeared  
 'From today goat and sheep is by us forsworn'  
 "When the Manas came the heads of the boys had vanished,  
 "And we showed them the heads of goat and sheep  
 "Then we fell on the host and chased them across the river"  
 Then all gave offerings to the god and after the offerings sat  
 down to the feast,  
 Danced the whole night and made merry  
 Rising early next morning they put the god in the *pen gara*,  
 Then returned to the village and washed their feet.

## XVIII

*The Migration of the Sarpe Saga*

In the evening they ate the rest of the feast and rejoiced  
 What then said the goddess? "A feud has begun

<sup>1</sup> The members of the Marapa clan do not eat goat, and the members of the Here Kumra clan eat neither goat nor sheep.

"Between you and the Manas. Leave this place and  
 "Carry me with you."

So they made ready and set out, taking with them,  
 Their goods, the goddess, their cattle and all.

After three months, where did they get to?

They reached the forest of Dariagaon

But they had no food and nothing to eat.

Then what did the goddess say:

"In Khaldoni Warpani live the Kurmetas

"Their Raja is Pen Pulum Potal, called the Blind Potal

"From his birth he has had no eyes, blind he was born.

"As a blind man he became Raja.

"He has rice, sixty fields of rice, ready for harvest.

"Go there at midnight, take sickles and carts."

They went, women and men went at night,

Reaped and threshed the rice, and took it away in carts.

In a single night they reaped fifteen fields and took away the  
 grain.

Again the next night they went and reaped the rice of fifteen  
 fields.

Thirty fields they reaped, thirty fields were left unreaped.

Their carts formed a track, and in a bag of the last cart

The fiery goddess Jangu Bai made a hole.

They husked the rice and all had a meal.

After three days, the Raja's men saw what had happened.

Great was the outcry and they went to tell the blind Raja.

The blind Raja came out to the rice field.

"Where did they reap?" he asked, and felt the stubble.

"True, they have reaped here; now look for the footprints."

The foot-prints were found, and also the track of the carts.

On the track they saw the trail of the grain

That had dropped from the hole.

They followed the track, then the god came in sight.

The blind Raja accompanied them and his men saw the god.<sup>1</sup>

"Lord, here is someone's god," they said.

1. Here as elsewhere 'god' (pen) stands for the visible sacred symbols of the deity, not for Jangu Bai in her divine form.

"Take me to the god" They led him before the god  
 At once he fell to the ground, lay prostrate before the god  
 When he rose again he could see  
 "Who is the priest of this god? Search for him"  
 One man went to call the priest

Come all of you, the Raja calls you!"  
 They came and fell down before the god  
 Then Tumram was possessed by the god  
 And he spoke "The deity says we brought stolen rice"  
 The blind man said "I don't call you thieves.

From birth I have been without sight

But today I am seeing

'You I will not call thieves

I will bring goats and rice for your offerings"  
 And he sent for a goat and sacrificed it,

Then he said to them "Come to the village"

They packed up their luggage and went to the village,

From the forest they went to the village

There they lived for four years

Then what did they say?

Brothers here we will stay no longer

'Here we are too many, let us go

And live in a separate village.'

What village did they select?

Yetajara Jajara, Little Chunki, Great Chunki,

Kanan Vihari, Minkore Bhamana

The goddess was to dwell at Latdevi,

The rajas were to dwell at Yadbhar Parandum Bhiri

The Khamk posts were to be at Khamana

Dama Moti Kania was to dwell at Temepura

And the sati were to be at Sauli

They returned and packed up their belongings,

Took with them their cattle and goods,

They established their gods and founded the village

When the village was founded they dwelt there and twelve  
 years passed

They built court houses and built a two storied house.



## XIX

*The Quest for the Sacred Bamboo*

Then what did Jangu Bai do?

She came to Dama Moti Kania and said:

"Sister, ask from your father and uncle a present."

"For what gift shall I ask, all that I want I have got."

" 'Jangu Bai is in need of a *kati*,<sup>1</sup> I am in need of a palanquin handle ' "

"Ask for those gifts."

To ask for these gifts she went to the court.

Her father and uncles sat in the court.

"Ram, Ram, father."—"Whence have you come daughter?

"Never before were you seen here in court, what has brought you today?"

"Give me a gift."—"I'll give you a gift;

"Do you want gold, silver or horses?"

"Do you want cows?"

"I want none of these."

"Do you want an elephant?"—"No, that I don't want."

"Then what do you want?"

"You won't give it!"—"We will.

"If we don't give you your gift we'll do penance in the sky of sun and moon

"In the underworld of Shek Nagoba we'll do penance.

"By them we swear, we will give you your present."

"For my goddess, I want a sacred *kati*, for myself a palanquin handle."

At these words, they all said:

"A *kati* you say, we have never seen one.

"Brothers what shall we do, now we're in trouble.

"This *kati* you mention, no one knows of it."

"I won't go unless you give me a *kati*." And so she remained.

"Brother Tumram, you go and search for a *kati*."

"No, I can't go."

"Brother Rai Siram, you go!"—"No, I can't go."

1. A bamboo slave, Cf. pp. 114, 115.

"Brother Kodapa, you go!"—"No, I can't go"

"Brother Salam you go!"—"No, I can't go"

"Brother Veti, you go!"—"No, I can't go"

"Brother Marapa you go!"—"No, I can't go"

"Brother Here Kumra you go!"—"No, I can't go"

"Now, who will go?" The last brother is Mandari

"Little brother Mandari we have all proved too weak

"You must go son

You are my elders, you tell me to go

"One says he'll cut grass and sends another to sell it

"No one can clear up this trouble, therefore you have brought it on me

"I shall go, but what honour will you accord me?"

"When you come to our seven houses, we'll honour you

"And we'll honour your wife

"Sari and bodice we'll give her, and to you turban and scarf"

Round Dama Moti's neck was a necklace worth nine lakhs

"Daughter take off that necklace and give it to him",

She took it off and put it round the neck of her youngest uncle Mandari

"Now I am going," he said to all sons, daughters and sister in law,

And the wives of his brothers touched his feet

"Now I am going, until my return twelve years will elapse

"Thereafter you shall wait for me five days more

"If by that time I have not returned perform the funeral rites"

He went, first roamed over earth, then over sand,

Thus one year passed, and next he roamed over mother of pearl,

Next he roamed over floating leaves and thus

Came to the sea Thus six years passed

In the sea was a golden temple—Who dwelt there?

Waterspirit, Turmeric spirit, Milk spirit, spirit of the Swing,

Kamkabudowelag, the King of the Water, to them he came

! The term funeral rites is used to translate *p'tre* the memorial rite which may be performed any time after the cremation or burial

They asked him: "Who are you brother?"

"I am Mandari, and I have come for the divine *kati*."

"Where will you find it, brother?"

He stayed there five days and they gave him food.

From there he started to search the water

Where did he go next?

There was a floating *pounpali* leaf,

On which lived the eagles Ranisurvalik

Here he came and sat down.

The birds of the place had gone to feed on pearls and diamonds.

When they returned, they wondered and asked:

"Who are you, you in our home?"

"I am a man."—"And why have you come?"

"By your coming you have defiled our god's place."

"I am in trouble and therefore I came."

"What is your trouble?"—"There is a daughter of mine.

"Who wants as a present for Raitar, wants a sacred *kati*.

"In search of this I have come."

"Oh fool, where will you find it? Until death you won't find it."

"Give me advice, sister," so saying he fell at her feet.

"O stupid man, truly I'll tell you, but where will you go?"

"There are three hundred and sixty gods guarding the

"Divine *kati*, which is on the head of the water-spirit

"It is there, but how can you get it?"

"I'll give you a present, but get it for me."

"What reward will you give me?"

From his neck he took the necklace worth nine lakhs.

And hung it round the female bird's neck.

This was the reward. "Yet another reward shall you have.

"Among our eight houses you shall be revered.

"When in Bhawe month and in Pus we give offerings to all the gods and to Raitar,

"We will think of you too."

"Now make yourself ready, Mandari

"Leave your belonging here and take only a knife.

"Tighten your belt and put the knife near the navel.

"Tie your scarf round your ears so that the wind may not harm you,

"Sit firmly on us."

Then the male and the female bird put their wings together

The right wing of one and the left wing of the other

They placed together and on them Mandari sat.

'Listen brother we will do three flights and within

'These three you must get it, if you fail we'll

'Do a fourth flight on that you must get it with your knife.

'Hold on carefully So they told him and he sat down.

Then they began to fly, rose into the sky,

To the place where the *kati* grew, steering straight they swooped down,

Flew low but just one wing beat wide of the *kati*

They turned back, but again flew wide of the *kati*

'Oh curse why can't I catch you!'

Again they turned and this time were four beats wide.

But on the fourth flight he gripped the bamboo

Drew his knife and slashed it off

"Have you cut it, son?"—"Yes, now fly back!"

Swiftly they rose and he took it away

It turned to evening and he left the waters,

The gods were hushed in silence

*Garrattarra* the birds swooped down on their nest.

When they alighted, he too got down from their wings,

And he looked at the bamboo Lo! it had seeds.

"Brother will this *kati* suffice or not?"

It will do, it will do," and he fell at the feet of the birds.

'Now go brother,' they said

He tied it up in his scarf, and taking it on his shoulder,

He took the road to his country

## XX

### *Mandari's Home Coming*

Six years he had been on his way

Now after another six years he approached his home

Twelve years had elapsed, and five days more passed.  
When five days had passed, they began performing the  
*karum* rites<sup>1</sup>

Just then he arrived and put down the *kati* at the sacred  
feast place.<sup>2</sup>

Then he entered the courtyard.

During twelve years his beard had grown one and a half  
feet long,

The hair on his head hung down in long strands.

When he entered the courtyard nobody knew him.

"I went to bring the divine *kati*." Then they knew him.

They embraced him and began to weep.

"Do not weep. I have come and have brought it."

"As you instructed us, so we prepared your funeral and  
started the rite."

There was a feast and he partook of the meal.

When he had eaten, they cut his hair and shaved off his beard

And dressed him in new clothes.

He appeared as he had been before.

## XXI

### *The Establishment of Jangu Bai's cult.*

The goddess then said: "Take up the Devnar *kati* and  
bring it to Parandoli Bhirwar."

Mandari carried the *kati*, carried it to Parandoli Bhirwar,

That is Jangu Bai's residence, and

There he sowed the seed;

Sowed enough for Jangu Bai's *kati*, and enough for the  
palanquin's handle.

The seed sprouted and grew in the soil,

All over the earth it spread, everywhere it spread.

Jangu Bai's *kati* stood up, and the girl's palanquin handle  
was made.

The handle of Dama Moti's litter was made

They dressed the goddess' *kati*, and when this was done

1. The *karum* rite is a ceremony which has to precede the *pitre*, the memorial feast.

2. At the *pen-gara*.

The goddess spoke

' Now you eight men go to eight villages

TO THE EIGHT MEN SHE GAVE EIGHT SPEAR-  
HEADS

TO EACH SHE GAVE ONE, TO THE EIGHT SHE GAVE  
EIGHT SPEAR HEADS

THESE SHALL TAKE MY NAME JANGU'S SPEAR-  
HEADS

JANGU'S KATI THEY SHALL BE CALLED

Now go sons Each took his belongings "Go," said the  
goddess

When she had spoken Tumram received the village Latdevi,

Raj Siram received the rule of Raj Murunda,

Kodapa received Yadbhar Parandun Bhiri,

Rajghar Salam received Sunuk Sonari Gharolea and Sontokni,

Sonbhar Vetu received Yeligaon Kehgaon Angaon Godni

and Hwari Nawargaon as his estates,

Marapa received Are Arli Sagda, Sangli, Wogere and Pareva,

Here Kumra received Kuruskhoji and Dharmmadhanapura,

Mandari received Satle, Kurki Gangejari Anejar and Sone  
jari

Then they bade farewell. Each took his kith and kin and  
went to his village

Jangu Bai took the spear Murgao and the two pointed posts

And went to her palace at Parandoli

Riding her winged horse she brought her own there

She arrived at her seat Parandoli,

Dismounted and put spear and posts inside

The goddess had come, so all gods bade Ram, Ram,

The Rajuls bade Ram, Ram the Betals of Karandewara bade  
Ram, Ram

Her friends of forty five villages gathered and bade Ram, Ram,

Kalikankali bade Ram, Ram, the Auwal residing at Parandoli  
bade Ram, Ram.

Mahankali Auwal of Chanda bade Ram, Ram

Patera Auwal and the Village Guardians of four directions  
bade Ram, Ram

<sup>1</sup> The spear heads, *sole* are he & obviously not the symbols of separate gods, but of Jangu Bai herself

Gaburaki and Podimasemal bade Ram, Ram.  
Podi Marke bade Ram, Ram.  
Jangu Bai sat on her throne and  
Received the offerings and worship that came from all sides.  
If asked for food, she gave food,  
If asked for wealth, she gave wealth.  
Received the offerings that were brought.  
Now the seven brothers came for a *kati*.  
Came to her seat and giving her offerings,  
Asked for a Devnar *kati* and took it away,  
To tie their god to the *kati*.  
The six brothers too came with offerings,  
Begged a *kati* for their god and took it away.  
The five brothers too came with offerings,  
Begged a *kati* for their god and took it away,  
At last came the four brothers with offerings.  
They too begged a *kati* for their god.  
Received it and took it away.

## CHAPTER V

### THE MYTHICAL ORIGIN OF THE CLAN DEITIES

THE myths given in the preceding chapter have brought us as far as the establishment of the first Gonds in the village of Poropatar

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tral home of the Gond tribe, where the foundations of the social order were laid and the Gonds taught how to worship their tribal gods. They are equally unanimous that the ancestors of the Gonds did not dwell long in Dhanegaon, but soon dispersed, each of the four phratnies setting out to found separate villages. Over the names of these first four villages there is also general agreement but little is said as to the actual circumstances of the establishment of the villages.

The following version of the exodus from Dhanegaon was told by Kanaka Manku a Pardi an of Pulera

So the Gonds were divided into four kin groups, the seven *uen* group were the Panior brothers the six *uen* group the Komda Vojalar brothers the five *uen* group the Raur brothers and the four *uen* group were the brothers Jangedeva Bomredeva Korerava and Korebira.<sup>1</sup> And all these four kin groups lived at Dhanegaon. But soon they began to quarrel. For the seven brothers said 'We are the greatest to our word you must listen.' But the six brothers claimed to be even higher likewise said the five and the four brothers, so they quarrelled and there was no end to strife and discord.

At last the eldest Panior brother said 'I am your headman, but since you will not obey me I will leave you.' Then more quarrels broke out and at last the Gonds decided to invoke Jangu Bai and ask her advice. The goddess possessed the priest and spoke through his mouth. 'If you remain in Dhanegaon all in one place, not only you but your children and grandchildren also will quarrel. It is

<sup>1</sup> These four brothers have no common name and in most versions they are simply referred to as the four *uen* brothers. Cf. p. 232.



better you part; each kin-group shall separate and each found its own village."

Then Panior collected his brothers and his whole family, and they packed up all their possessions and drove out their cattle, but when they were ready to start they knew not where to go; once more Panior invoked Jangu Bai and she showed him the way to Bourmachua. There all the seven brothers settled and thus Bourmachua became the home of the seven-*wen* Gonds.

When the Panior brothers had left Dhanegaon, Koinda Voja with all the six-*wen* people also made ready to depart. The six-*wen* people Jangu Bai sent to Jamtokorvelikinagur. After them the Raur brothers decided to found their own village and on Jangu Bai's advice went to Gudmasur Patera. At last only Jangedeva and his brothers were left in Dhanegaon, but they too wanted to move and Jangu Bai told them to settle at Kelchar Bamni.<sup>1</sup>

The subsequent fortunes of the four phratries, now each established in their own village and on their own land, are the subject of four parallel cycles of myths. These myths, elaborated not only in the epics of Pardhans, but also in dance songs of Gond women, are no less intimately connected with ritual observances than the myths of the origin of the Gond race. They are not merely a continuation of the myths dealing with primeval events; they stand largely by themselves and they explain and illustrate once more, and in an entirely different way, what has already been explained in the myths centring in the figure of Pahandi Kupar Lingal. They picture the clan-deities, the Persa Pen so dominant in Gond religion, not as deities given to the Gonds by an outside agency, but as figures grown out of Gond society.

Thus a problem arises: what is the relative position of the myths relating the institution of the tribal deities in Dhanegaon by Pahandi Kupar Lingal and the myths which describe the metamorphosis of individual men and women into deities, henceforth revered as Persa Pen?

The discussion of this problem will have to await a later chapter, but the following two myths the first recorded in prose and the second for the greater part in the original text, will demonstrate how the Gonds of each individual phratry regard their Persa Pen as a deity intimately linked with the fate of their legendary ancestors.

### *The Myth of Sungalturpo.*

The myth of Sungalturpo recorded below is recited by all Pardhans of the Pandwen *Saga*—that section of the six-brother phratry which claims descent from the six brothers confined in the primeval cave—

1. Some versions do not mention Jangu Bai as instrumental in the selection of these villages.

and is widely known among Gonds both of this and other phratnies. It relates the deification of Sungalturpo and Rai Bandar, who are jointly worshipped as the Persa Pen, the great clan-god of all the clans of the Pandwen *Saga*, and is thus a truly 'sacred' myth. The proper occasion for its recitation is the annual clan feasts in honour of the Persa Pen when it is sung in full or in parts by the Pardhan of the clan god and his two assistants. A Pardhan reciting it with all the usual elaborations takes two or three evenings to sing the entire myth, but here I have presented it in a condensed form. The style and even some of the individual episodes are exactly the same as in the myth of Manko, which will presently be given in the complete text, and there would be little purpose in burdening the reader with two such lengthy translations. All inessential details are therefore excluded from the following version.

In Jamtokorvelikinagur lived the six Koinda Voja brothers, and Volda Koinda Voja the eldest was married to Sungalturpo, the daughter of a seven wen man of Maraya clan. Now Volda Koinda Voja had given his wife a goldenbridal locket, worth nine thousand rupees, this locket shone so brightly that at night Sungalturpo need never light a lamp, even in the inner room of the house her husband could eat his meals by its radiance.

One day Sungalturpo was picking greens in the forest, it was  
 "as her  
 in the

gold,  
 swooping down he carried it off. But so heavy was the gold, that he dropped it into a river where it was swallowed by a fish.

Sungalturpo went home missing the precious ornament. Then night came. She served food to Koinda Voja in the inner room and at once he noticed the lack of light. "What have you done with the locket," he asked, but she could not explain its disappearance. Then Koinda Voja accused another man, accused that he drove Sungalt to put a foot over his threshold.

Weeping, Sungalturpo left her husband's house and Jamtokorvelikinagur, she was three months pregnant. First she went to the seven brothers at Bourmachua and asked for shelter, but seeing the wife of an important and powerful man, driven out by her husband, they dared not help her. With gifts of cloth and polite words they sent her away. So it was when she went to the five brothers at Gudmasur Patera, and the four brothers at Kelchar Bamru. In despair at the hard heartedness of men, she wandered through the forest and there met the tigress Rai Vagnari, who was also three months pregnant. In her foot Rai Vagnari had a thorn and she begged Sungal-

turpo to help her: "Sister help me! Take the thorn from my foot." But Sungalturpo was frightened, "If I come near, will you not eat me?" She asked. But the tigress swore by all the gods that she would do Sungalturpo no harm. So Sungalturpo went with the tigress to her cave, and with her hair-pin took out the thorn from the festering foot. When she had opened the sore, the pus seeped out, and soon the tigress felt better.

Sungalturpo stayed with Rai Vagnari in the cave; each day the tigress brought provisions; she waylaid people in the forest and carried off their goods. Thus they lived for six months and then, on the same day, Sungalturpo gave birth to a son and the tigress to a male cub. They called the boy Rai Bandar, and the cub Rai Dala.

One day the tigress said to Sungalturpo: "It is more than a year since you came to my cave, how is it that none, neither husband nor brother nor sister has come to see you? How is that your husband does not search for you? I will go and see what has happened to your people."

Now Koinda Voja had completely forgotten Sungalturpo. He never gave her so much as a thought. And the tigress, finding him prosperous, but unconcerned for his wife's fate, was angered, and she preyed on the cattle of the Koinda Voja brothers. Within a short time she killed a hundred bulls and cows. Koinda Voja was shocked by this misfortune and he consulted his father Tatitratl Sundarmula. "Misfortune has befallen our house. Soon all our villagers will leave Jamtokorvelikinagur, where tigers ravage their cattle, and you too will have to go."

"What then shall I do?" asked Koinda Voja.

"We will invoke Jangu Bai and ask her advice," said the wise old man.

So Tatitratl Sundarmula prayed to Jangu Bai and she possessed the old man and through his mouth spoke to Koinda Voja: "The guilt that has brought misfortune upon your village is in your own house. Sungalturpo, whom you have heartlessly driven away, must be found and brought back to Jamtokorvelikinagur."

Then Koinda Voja asked his brothers, and his uncles and their sons, and many of the men of Jamtokorvelikinagur to go and find Sungalturpo, but they all refused, saying. "It is hopeless! In none of the villages of which we know is Sungalturpo."

At last Koinda Voja called his Pardhan, the wise and experienced Hirasuka: "Go, you must find Sungalturpo," he said, "bring her back to my house." So Hirasuka promised not to rest till he had found his patron's wife, and taking his fiddle, spear and cloth, he set out on his errand. For full twelve years he wandered through the four quarters of the world, through the south-country, the east-country, the west-country and the north-country and he saw all the villages



When Koinda Voja and the men of Jamtokorvelikinagur arrived, there was no Sungalturpo and no Rai Bandar; in their stead stood a *chauwur* and a *sale*, and the *kaṭora* Pen Bupial lifted up *chauwur* and *sale* and proclaimed to the assembled men: "This is our house god (*rota raitar*) our great god (*persa pen*).<sup>1</sup> Sungalturpo Rai Bandar, hasten to worship the god!"

Six grandfathers, twelve fathers, twenty-one sons, and twenty-four grandsons, Pen Bupial, the priest, and Hirasuka the Pardhan, all gathered. "Hasten to worship the god!" they called. When the sun rose paternal and maternal kinsmen, brothers and brothers-in-law assembled and played drums, trumpets and fiddle, took up the god and carried it around the village; then brought it to rest under the sun-shelter in front of Koinda Voja's house. There sisters and daughters, wives of brothers and kinsmen assembled, poured six pots of water over the god and all stood with folded hands. Then they went to a mahua tree and brothers and kinsmen sat down to a meal.

"Let us go to the river," they said, and set out with the god for the river. There they offered a black and a white chicken to the water-goddess; the *kaṭora* took the god into the river, swimming and splashing he bathed the god. Then they sacrificed a cock and a goat to Raitar, and at dusk ate the sacrificial food. After the meal they took up the god and returned to Jamtokorvelikinagur; there at the feast-place (*pen-gara*) outside the village they gathered. Standing up before the god they held rice in their hands and prayed, then sacrificed a young cow, horned goats, and spurred cocks to Raitar, and cooking their meat offered some to the god; six men ate first, then all the others. The sun rose and they untied the god, wrapt up the *chauwur*, putting it away in a pot, then playing drums, trumpets and fiddle, went to the forest and hid the god<sup>2</sup> high up in a mahua tree. Then they embraced the tree and said: "Ram, Ram, we go now, Raitar, you stay here, for twelve months remain here."

At last they returned to the feast place, took the pot with the god<sup>3</sup> and carried it to the *sati-shrine*<sup>4</sup> there put it down, and returned to their houses. The women washed their feet, and they sat down smoking leaf pipes. Then once more they beat the drums and began to dance. At last all bade farewell, rewarded the Pardhan with gifts of cloth and millet, saluted each other and departed to their own homesteads.

### *The Myth of Manko.*

A place closely corresponding to that which Sungalturpo occupies

1. It is significant that here the singular form *pen*, and not the plural *penk*, is used: though two human persons, Sungalturpo and Rai Bandar are after their metamorphosis considered as one.

2. Evidently only the *sale*.

3. The pot, into which they had put the *chauwur*.

4. The shrine containing the symbols of ancestors, cf. p. 241.

usually at the beginning of an epic. The translation is more or less verbal except in places where a somewhat freer translation was necessary to render the sense clear.

Yad Raur, the grandsire, Jugat Raur  
the sire,  
Serma Raur and Dundria Raur,  
And fourteen thousand Raur  
Kotkapite and Junga Raur,  
Sondevi the grandmother, Rupdevi the  
mother  
Waladevi and Hiradevi of Padmalpuri

In Gudmasur Patera the Raur folk  
Were settled in countless homesteads  
The five brother folk,  
Of golden lineage sprung  
Of silver lineage blossomed,  
Of fruitful wombs were born the Raur  
folk

Twelve royal kinsmen,  
One and twenty sons,  
Sirivalaval, the priest,  
His wife the priestess Damevaleval  
There too were the homesteads of the  
Pardhans Sudia Budial and Hirasuka  
Meanwhile from Sitaghat Metaghat  
Ahatundi Mahatundi  
The *rakshasa's* daughter  
Tundial Manko  
Went to her grandmother Padmalpuri  
Then the Raur folk's dance feast  
started,  
To Padmalpuri the dancers went

The Raur arrived, but Manko did not  
appear,  
Yad Raur, the grandsire, Jugat Raur  
the sire,  
Serma Raur, fourteen thousand Raur

And Dundria Raur, all went to dance  
To the roar of disk-drums,  
To the blare of brass horns,  
With pennants flying  
To the noise of kettle-drums,  
To the rattle of muskets,  
To the boom of the gun Ramjengi  
High rose clouds of dust,

*Yad Raur tado, Jugat Raur babo,*

*Won paja Serma Raur, Dundria Raur,  
Won paja chanda hazar Raurk,  
Wan paja Kotapite Junga Raur,  
Sondevi baji, Rupdevi auval,*

*Won paja Waladevi Hiradevi Padmal-  
puri  
Gudmasur Patera Raurk  
nahin nagude nande manter,  
mata paja tamun naur Raurk  
soneta ueli sangta,  
rupata weli kojsta,  
korsta paja pandita pir pandita*

*pandita paja parenda jan raj kuralir  
ekus putralir,  
uon paja Sirivalaval Katogal,  
uona jorita uelir Damevalava kajoje  
uon paja Sudia Budial  
Hirasuka Pataji nande manter  
Mat paja Sitaghat Mefaghat  
Ahatundi Mahatundi  
Bakasana mair Tundial rakasana  
mair Tundial Manko  
Padmalpuri kaka naga sota  
sota paja Raurkna yetmasar pestia*

*pesta paja Padmalpuri naga yetmasar  
soter,  
Raurk sota paja Mankona disa sto,*

*Yad Raur tado, Jagat Raur babo*

*won paja Serma Raur, chanda hazar  
Raurk,  
Dundria Raur, yetmasar soter,  
sonji mata kanki dapna sarang anta  
kolikom neho anta,  
uta paja bereka ronjanta  
nagara toki hinter awas hure manta  
Janji bandena awas anta,  
Ramjengi bandena awas manta  
Kala pila turanta,*

Like betel-nuts cracked the pebbles.  
 Hookahs were lit and  
 Passed from mouth to mouth.  
 Arrived at Padmalpuri's place  
 The Raur folk danced  
 And Padmalpuri welcomed them,  
 Her greeting returned the Raur folk.  
 After the dance she bade them farewell,  
 Five diamonds, five pearls,  
 Five precious stones she gave them,  
 Greeted them ceremoniously,  
 Accepted in turn their greeting,  
 Then the Raur folk bade farewell.  
 All this time Manko was hidden  
 In the great, the celestial palace.  
 (Then said Padmalpuri)  
 "A dangerous rascal is Raur  
 But now I've bid him farewell,  
 My granddaughter too may look at  
 The dancers." So saying she unlocked  
 the door.

The door being open, what then said  
 Manko?

"Even if it costs me my life,  
 See! such a man will I wed."  
 What did she do?

Two turmeric roots the girl pounded,  
 Then, taking a brass-jug,  
 Laughing, mixed turmeric water.  
 Ahead strode Raur as tall as an ele-  
 phant,

On his feet sandals  
 Of gold and red leather;  
 Jewel-laden his head-dress,  
 With four pounds of pearls embroider-  
 ed

A shawl he had thrown round his  
 shoulders.

In front strode Raur,  
 Behind followed Manko;  
 Quickly, quickly, with turmeric water  
 Manko came running,  
 Poured turmeric water over Raur,

Poured turmeric water on his shawl;  
 Turning swiftly he saw her:

"My shawl you have ruined!"

Anger possessed him.

"I'll beat you! you wretch!

What a whore! you harlot's daughter!

What a whore! you daughter of some  
 man's penis!"

Quickly turning Manko fled,

*chikni supari karkar woranta.  
 Janjari hukana pelauwa anta,  
 pite hukana sur tirianta.  
 Padmalpuri naga sota paja  
 Raurkna yetmusar wata  
 wata paja Padmalpuri ura man tungta  
 tana man Raurk yete.  
 Teta paja sar tunga lagta,  
 siyung hirang siyung moting  
 siyung kankar sita  
 tanwa man urk sita,  
 ura man tana yete,  
 yete paja sar ater.  
 ata baja Mankon andargande  
 deo mahal mahalt ropo kondi kita.*

*Nend pera papir Raur mantor,  
 mata paja won sar tungton.  
 nawa tang miar surar injere mata  
 kulut tendta.*

*tendta baja batal inta?*

*nari saiwal nend saia puti,  
 nend sura! ital jor tungana,  
 batal kita?  
 Jamli kankana lora piskta  
 piskt paja kormandal jari pita  
 yer tungta dawaring tungta.  
 dobial yenit dhat Raur mune ator,*

*soneta juta lalkand juta  
 kade mantang;  
 kanyal topi talade manta,  
 mata paja naye men moti bari kita*

*sela waruwiru watter.*

*watta paja mune mantor Raur,  
 won paja Manko;  
 paja guda guda dohra pita  
 Manko witanta, witapaja  
 Raurt poro kamkana dohra wosi  
 wedita  
 selat poro dohra wedita,  
 wedita paja gararara malsi surantor;  
 surta paja, nawa selatun kharab kita  
 tsauta songunk wator.  
 paka nana! ailajawa!  
 bad rande lamdina miar  
 bad rande basrina miar*

*guda guda paja malta Manko witanta,*

After her ran Raur  
 'I'll beat you!' shouted Raur as he  
 ran  
 Running she reached the palace,  
 Entered the door and shut it behind  
 her  
 Then said Padmalpuri,  
 Fool don't chase my granddaughter  
 Raur have you eaten opium?  
 Are you drunk? Fool! Do not go near  
 her!  
 Then going to the palace and shutting  
 the door  
 She said Fool! Don't go near her"  
 "Shut up" (shouted Raur) "Where  
 ever she goes,  
 If she flies to the sky, I'll drag her  
 down with the goad of a mahout  
 If she hides in the ground  
 I'll dig her out with an axe  
 If she runs here and there with a  
 snake's snare I'll catch her,  
 Who pours water on me becomes my  
 wife,  
 Who points a finger at me, becomes  
 my wife  
 It matters not where the bitch may  
 hide'  
 Then Raur turned away,  
 Took the path to Gudmasur Patara  
 When he had gone  
 The seven brothers came to dance the  
 dandari  
 Then came the six brothers to dance the  
 dandari  
 Their greeting she took  
 Her greetings she gave them  
 Then came the four brothers to dance  
 the dandari.  
 Grandmother Padmalpuri said  
 "Now the dandari dancers have left,  
 To-morrow you lead the women to  
 dance the dandari dance"  
 "Where shall I go?"  
 "x x x x x"  
 "y y y y y"  
 "z z z z z"  
 go  
 The women dancers set out,  
 Manko had donned Padmalpuri's  
 Gorgeous cloak worth nine lakhs  
 Had donned a sari

*wineke tan paja Raur wintantor*  
*Pakan' injeke, wintantor*

*usta paja andargande sota,*  
*darwazat ropo nengn daruaja watta*

*uatta paja Padmalpuri inta*  
*Na tang miar mecha witma*  
*Raurie batat bapu tinsly?*  
*batal utisly? mecho' sonma'*

*Marla Andargande sonji daruaja wat-*  
*anta*  
*Watta paja Mecho' sonma*  
*Inma, nend surueke soteke*

*uelon akasne daki akosate umka*

*dhartri toga munsleke*  
*kudarite kalska*  
*agal bagal daki nag pasane umka'*

*wer roska naua uelaj*

*bota surta naua uelaj,*

*daki бага ламді бошјина муар*

*nend garne maltor Raur*  
*Gudmasur Patara ta sari dantor,*  
*Sota paja nend ur paja*  
*dandari tamun yerur,*

*ur paja tamun sarur dandari uanta*

*ura man tana yeta,*  
*tana man urk sita*  
*urk paja tamun nalwira dandari uanta.*

*Padmalpuri kako inta,*  
*Nend malsu sota dandari*  
*sota paja nari uelokna dandari*

*Beke dandari?*  
*Manko nime dandari sauri kim,*  
*dandari sauri kita*  
*paja uelokna dandari ata*  
*nanta dandari pesi beke dalar?*

*Hi cilokna dandari pesimar*  
*jenneke Manko Padmalpurina*  
*nau lak shingari yeta*  
*yeta paja agajar pitambar,*



Of precious silk cloth and  
Put on a silver embroidered bodice.  
The dandari bade farewell,  
But passing a thorned fence  
She rent seven threads of the silken  
sari.

Having torn the silk, she stopped and  
looked,  
"What a stupid thing to do!" thought  
Manko.

With sad and heavy heart,  
She entered the palace,  
Took off the cloak worth nine lakhs  
Loosened the precious silk robe.  
"Now my grandmother will curse me  
and scold me."

With tears wetting her cheeks she  
waited,

Her face was fallen with fear.  
The women dandari took their farewell.  
"Now let me see," said Padmalpuri,  
"Where can the child have gone?"  
Entering the palace, she looked around  
The cloak, worth nine lakhs, lay loos-  
ened,

All the jewels she saw,  
All were there, the silk-robe she saw  
Turned it over  
Examined it carefully.

At the border five threads were torn.  
"You bitch, you careless devil,  
This is the robe to be worn  
At the worship of all the great gods."  
Anger gripped her;  
"Where did you go, Manko?  
You daughter of a bitch don't let me  
see the dust of your feet.

You wretched whore get out!  
Stay no longer in my house."  
"Don't stay, you say, but where shall  
I go?

Dying my father spoke: 'Go to your  
grandmother Padmalpuri.'  
Now to whose house shall I go,  
Mother's brothers I have none,  
Father's brothers I have none,  
To whom shall I go?  
What shall I do?

Oh Bhagwanta! what fate did you  
give me!

All other women, the seven sisters,  
All have good fortune  
But I have no luck

*dikri karsi kita,  
kura mola kanchori dabi kita.  
Dandari sar anta  
ata paja sure chahakna bandora  
yerung taga namusta pitambar dikri ta*

*namta paja nehena surta,*

*Manko surtaki nadan kam ata.*

*phikal khatal man tungta  
andargande nengta,  
nengta paja nau lakh shingar kali kita  
agajar pitambar khali kita.  
kit paja nendu nawa kako rangar ita*

*tala kaner pitpod ronjna mandi kita*

*kita paja chudur todi kita  
paja weilokna dandari sar ata.  
ata paja nendu sura inta Padmalpuri,  
nawa tang miar diso beke sonji mandar.  
Andargande nenganta, nengta paja  
suranta*

*nau lakh shingar kali kise manta,  
samdo wisora suranta,  
samdo manta, pitambar suranta,  
kasum adam suranta  
tarib tunganta; tungta paja  
wotita patau seona siyung taga namta.  
Hatrande papi dushman  
Sapan kuri penkun mune  
pitambar uhti penkunk mepna and.  
Songunk wata;  
beke soti ha Manko?  
niwa koji maki rande larina miar.*

*Bosri rande miar pesodia  
nawa ron manma.  
Manma ineke, бага daka?*

*bawal saneke: Padmalpuri kakonaga  
son itor.  
Nendu bona ron daka,  
mamal injeke silor,  
kakal injeke silor,  
bona ron daka?  
bad witsar tunka?  
ye dewa nashibni Bhagwanta!*

*samde baikunk selar yerunk  
baden andenk jinga ata,  
nak jingi sile,*

What then shall I do?

Said (Padmalpur) Go you bitch  
Or with the rod whip I'll beat you to  
death!

Driven out tears streamed from  
Her eyes then she lamented

What shall I do? Where shall I go?  
Then she remembered Dundria Raur  
How he had said You may flee to  
The sky I'll drag you back with a  
goad

You may hide in the earth  
I'll dig you out with an axe  
You may run here and there I'll catch  
you in a snare for a snake!  
So she took the road to Gudmasur  
Patera

And reaching the village,  
Went to a mango-grove  
"(If I go to his house) they'll call me  
a run away woman"

What then shall I do?  
So saying she went to a mango tree  
Climbed into the mango tree  
And eat on a branch  
Sat there till exactly at mid-day  
The groom of Raur's horse  
Went to water the horse  
He saddled the horse  
Then mounted the horse and  
Put it to trot and to canter  
Like a *kapena* bird it ran  
Like a potter's wheel it turned  
He rode to the stream Sirmakasa  
Galloping came the horse,  
Then into Sirmakasa's stall pool  
Up to the knees it entered  
Began to drink water  
Then sighted the girl,  
The girl caught its eye and the horse  
took fright,  
Bolted and off went the horse  
Thus devil of a horse why is it so  
frisky?

Wheat cakes it has eaten  
Dal it has eaten  
A vicious devil it is!<sup>1</sup>  
He led off the horse  
Then mounted and rode it away,  
Through four fields he rode it

*tena bad utsar tunka?*  
*inta maje son sande lamdi*  
*lalkan korora piteke mendol*  
*uata*

*Son inke tala kaner pūpoḍ*  
*man koner sonja,*  
*bad utsar tunka? бага daka?*  
*inke yadi uata Raurta*  
*Dundria Raur nend akasne doke*  
*akosate umka utor,*

*dhartitaga minsteke*  
*kudasite kaska*  
*agol bagol daka nag pasane umka*

*Gudmasur Paterata sarī chale mata*

*paja Gudmasur Patera sonji*  
*amraibagun ropo sota*  
*sota paja indke natar bori indanur,<sup>1</sup>*

*bad utsar tunka iteke?*  
*ata paja kundaga marka*  
*markat poro teigia,*  
*khandat poro sonj uta,*  
*uta poja nendu khark dupari ata*  
*ata paja Raurta koda kodator sar*  
*koda tendantor, yer uhulen*  
*koda sauri kitor,*  
*kua paja kodala poro sawari atar*  
*ata paja koda utina koranta*  
*kaps mo uolanta*  
*kumana tsokun mori tiraanta,*  
*Sirma kasa yetaga tarantor,*  
*gardabad koda uanto*  
*uata paja Sirmakasa dohotaga*  
*songran yetago nengta*  
*nengta paja yer unlen lagta*  
*aneke baina leheru arta,*  
*kodata kankun poro koda bujeje mata*

*koda baure mato, mala koda penta*  
*Ihin bahan koda rande mastik uata?*

*Gohkna malido ita*  
*sarai dari ita*  
*sande mastik tsur aio*  
*kodaton purantor,*  
*marla tsauta koda sawar asi puranton*  
*uaton wauk putur,*

<sup>1</sup> *Swar-bore* is the term for a woman who forces herself upon a man by coming to his house grasping his head and refusing to leave. This method of securing a husband is mainly used by women who have deserted one husband and are in search of another.

Then brought it again  
Once more to the water,  
Again it entered the water,  
To its knees came the water,  
To its chest came the water,  
Standing, mouth to the water, it began  
to drink,

Drinking, sighted the girl.  
The girl caught its eye and again it  
took fright.

"Hey! foolish horse, why don't you  
drink?"

Again he led it some distance away,  
Then once more mounting the horse  
He rode it away;  
Two miles he took it,  
Then brought it again,  
Led it again to the water,  
But again it shied.

"Now the horse won't drink."  
He took the horse to the village,  
Left it tied up, and  
Went to Dundria Raur:

"Hear, master, hear."

"What is there to hear?"

"Your horse will not drink,  
It keeps on shying."

"Damn the wretch!" Then Raur rose  
And mounted the horse,  
Cantered over four fields  
Brought it up to the water,  
There it grew restless;  
He led it again to the water;

Then again it shied  
"Hey, you devil!" (he shouted),

Led the horse from the water,  
Tied it up to the fence,  
Then grasping a fence pole, (he shout-  
ed):

"You witch! what devil inhabits this  
water?"

What fiend of a spirit lives here?"

Then he beat the water,  
Hit it here and there,  
Frogs and tadpoles  
Water-sprites and nymphs  
Stirred in the water:

"Raur, have you gone mad?" they said,  
"Has he chewed opium, has he smoked  
hemp?"

To-day the Kundagai mangoes  
Have ripened."—(Then said Raur:)

*tsauta tarantor  
unde yetaga tarantor,  
tsauta yetaga nengta  
tungrank yer ata,  
marla tsauta satink yetaga rengta  
todī uḥsta yetaga toṛtk yer lagta*

*lagnege tsauta lehemī baina  
kankun poro tsauta arta arneki tsauta  
koḍa bujre mata.  
Are! ranḍe koḍa bari yer uno?*

*Tsauta tendta khub lang pursi water  
unde marle tsauta koḍa utsi  
unde purantor;  
unde kosmen wotor  
malsi wator tator,  
tata paja tsauta yetaga neḥtor,  
neht paja tsauta bujre mata,  
nge koḍa yer uno.  
narla koḍatun naḥe malusi wontor,  
roneke koḍa nilustor,  
nilst paja marla tsauta Dundṛia Raur  
tago rotor;*

*dad, bapu, dad.*

*Batata dad?*

*Koḍa yer bari utsile  
bujre mata.*

*Are tana maicha! marla Raur tētor  
tsauta koḍa utor,  
uta paja nalon wauk puṛtor,  
marla yetaga tator,  
tat paja bujre mata,  
koḍa marla tsauta yetaga neḥtor;  
neht paja bujre mata;  
Are, niwa maicha!  
Koḍatun bahari tendtor,  
welum kuṭa taga dohtor,  
doht paja ade welum kuta pitor*

*niwa maicha, yetaga bad ranḍe saitar  
manti?*

*bad ranḍe bhut manti?*

*tsauta yetun pantor,  
baṛal baṛal pantor,  
pat paja reveng dokeng  
Tewelag Bodiwelag  
tirusan saṭi Kamkawelag;  
batal inta, Raur pisre mati,  
hapu titi ganja uti,*

*nend kundagai marka  
parwata. Indke*

Now is no season for mangoes to  
ripen?

Then Raur looked up and saw,  
On a mango branch Manko sitting

She caught his eye,

Then he blinked with his eyes  
And said 'You there, who may you  
be?

You daughter of a bitch!  
I'll beat you, you whore,  
Get down you shameless witch  
'Who am I?—It is I (said Manko)  
'With my grandmother Padmalpuri  
I stayed

And that day you said  
'Water you have poured on me  
So where'er you may go  
If you flee to the sky  
With a goad I will drag you  
If you hide in the ground  
With an axe I'll unearth you  
If you run here and there  
With a snake snare I'll catch you'  
So I have come—I, a girl!  
'Come down!—No I won't climb  
down,  
'Uninvited a runaway woman has  
Thrust herself on him the people will  
say

So return to the village and bring from  
your house  
Drums and trumpets' So said she  
and Raur went back to the village  
Arrived there, and see!  
Soon rose the roll of the disk drums  
The sound of double drums rose,  
The sound of trumpets flared up  
The great palanquin was brought.  
Then see! They took it  
To the great palace  
Thus it is when the raja speaks, the  
whole world moves  
When the poor man speaks his own  
heard does not quiver  
With splendour they held the wedding  
For five and five days the wedding feast  
lasted,  
Then the wedding was over  
Then one month and two months  
passed  
Three months and four months,

*Nend bad marka sadual diwos ao*

*suruake surantor  
markata khandat poro Manko uts  
manta  
mala paja tana lehem kanjkon poro  
uan arta,  
arta paja pil pit kanrk kitor  
kita paja, nime bade ni andi?*

*lamaina mias bosri ranhi  
paka niua baihin maicha,  
reia maicha bosri rande  
Boni andi? Nana andon,  
Padmalpuri kako nagar matona andon*

*ad net nime iti,  
na poro yer rosika iti,  
tan karta barabar бага даiana  
akaine mateke  
akosate umka  
dharis taga minsteke,  
kudarite katska  
agal bagal soteke,  
nag pasane umka iti,  
tan karta ualon nana baina,  
Reia—reion,*

*dang steke!—kesua uateke  
suar bosri indanir*

*tsauta nate sonji nahun ron*

*woja gajate wom Ita paja  
tsauta naten rogo sonmar  
sota paja nend suraki,  
hanki dapna sarang anta,  
jora dolkna auar anta,  
jora peprena auar anta  
nendu soga sanu paiki tarmar,  
tata paja nend sura  
andar gande mahalte uoimar,  
nata paja imnets raja bole qirtum dola,*

*gharib bole daji hale*

*Nend gangajar marming tungmas,  
pachona pach daha rozna marming,*

*Marming sare mata.  
Paja unde mahina, rand mahinang*

*mund mahinang, nalung mahinang*

Five months and six months,  
Seven and ten months passed.  
Then who came to know of the marriage?

The flower-born Lingal of Bijlipura.  
"Now my uncle has married a new wife,

The wedding is over, I will visit my new aunt," he said.

Pahandi Kupar Ling, with bag on his arms,

Ling on his feet and ling round his neck  
Ling round the body, and ling at the throat

Of twelve threshing floors of Gond gods the priest,

Of thirty-three threshing-floors of Maratha gods the priest,

Of thirty-two threshing-floors of Telugu gods the priest.

"I will go to see my uncle,  
I will go to see my aunt";

Then Pahandi Kupar Lingal made ready,

Tied a sash round his waist,  
Folded it double and tied it fast.

The guitar with sixteen strings he  
Slung over one shoulder,

The double-barrelled gun Ramsari.  
He laid across the right shoulder,

Then grasped the gun-rest and  
Took the path to Gudmasur Patera.

When he had journeyed over one field  
He stopped and stood pondering,

The flower-born Lingal:  
"The sweet-smelling gods' rice,

The rice of the gods' realm,  
I will see how it stands."

So thinking the flower-born Lingal turned.

At that time, the time of his going  
To Sonkuruwa valley, Ramgeshri and Perageshri

The sambars, feeding on diamonds and  
drinking of pearls,  
Came from the forest Rairukan.

And the scent of the sweet smelling rice  
reached them,

The Damdaingali rice scented the air.  
"What a wondrous fragrance!

Four and four mouthfuls let's eat."  
So said Perageshri the sambar,

*vijung mahinang, sarung mahinang,  
yujung mahinang, daha mahinang,  
aian walatne bonk dad ata?*

*Bijlipura Pahandi Kupar Lingal.  
Nenda mamal puna ati tungtor,*

*marming ator, atin suplen daka, itor*

*Pahandi Kupar Lingal, laide ling,*

*lade ling, weede ling,  
mendode ling, ghoite ling,*

*Parenda Khaya Koya Wasi Penknor  
Bupial,*

*Tetishhara Los Maratha Penknor  
Bupial,*

*Batis Khaya Telenga Penknur, Bupial.*

*Alaman suplen daka,  
atin suplen daka;*

*Nend sauri mator Pahandi Kupar  
Lingal*

*tordan nayide dohtor  
rand jokang lohtor nayinde dohtor*

*sora pahaina lorlamji  
tina bagalte jolta waptor,*

*josa nalina Ramsaji bhande  
tina setate kanjtor*

*kanjta paja asur kating laide pitor  
Gudmasur Paterata sari pesitor.*

*Pesinuke undi waur mend sotor,  
sola paja nehna yadi kitor*

*Pahandi Kupar Lingal:  
penkun dainalik wanjing*

*devastan wanjing manta,  
supsi daka, itorki*

*Pahandi Kupar Lingal maltor.*

*Malan garka ad garkat ropo  
Sonkurwat ropo Ramgeshri Perageshri*

*mauk hirana charo motina yer untang*

*ani poro wartang Rairukan keratal  
wartang.*

*waian garka wanjina was sule mata,*

*Damdaingale wanjina gari pata,  
Kai sobata gari pata!*

*nalk nalk bukang tindkat  
inta Perageshri mau, indan garka*

But Ramgeshri answered  
 "Son, don't be a fool don't anger  
 The priest of the fifty six crores of  
 gods,  
 You fool! I won't go  
 "If it kills me today let us go"  
 Headstrong and self-willed he set out  
 "What does it matter, Perageshri the  
 sambar said  
 "If it kills me, I will eat.  
 Walking walking they came to the  
 boundary,  
 Stood on the dung-covered rock,  
 Then raising their heads, stretched  
 Their necks over seven stockades  
 Across the fences of thorns,  
 And fed on the rice of the gods.  
 Perageshri the sambar ate without fear  
 But Ramgeshri ate trembling  
 More and more he ate.  
 With fear and trembling he ate.

So that he choked, spat out a mouthful  
 of food,  
 Spat and *sarrarrarra* he withdrew his  
 neck,  
 Then on the rock with cow-dung  
 Spat out some more food  
 Dribbled saliva in a long line  
 And from the rock with dung  
 One furrow far he jumped,  
 Jumped and from there returned to  
 The forest Raurukan and to  
 The valley Sonkuruwa, there  
 Went the sambar.  
 Then came Pahandi Kupar Lingal,  
 Entered the seven gates of the rice field,  
 Went round to see the rice,  
 As he went he looked northwards

Looking round turned westwards  
 Then went from west towards Tehn  
 gana  
 Took then an eastern direction  
 Looking he went, and as he went  
 Came on the place like a winnowing  
 floor  
 Shocked, he beat his chest

*Ramgeshri into,*  
*Are, leka, mecho! Kori sonwat,*  
*Sepankun penkenur Bhupial andur,*

*mecho' sonmar aio*  
*hend saia puji dakat*  
*Tekhat balahaj tungmarki penmar*  
*Mecho, Perageshri mau*

*Paran gira soni bati tinda*  
*Danta danta n'at poro uatang,*

*gomera bandat poro nintang*  
*nita paja gojing isahang*  
*tala taktin yerung surkna,*  
*sure chahakana bandora,*  
*devonar uanng tintang*  
*Perageshri mau uere nita tita*  
*Ramgeshri uere tita,*  
*nita paja marla trauta,*  
*Uere tita uere tita*  
*Seti atior jaga aio*  
*aneke p'ip atior jaga*  
*Perageshri tita*

*Songunk uata Ramgeshri mau*  
*ake tita kote Perageshri pata*  
*pata pata bukamen potsa kakta,*

*kakneke sarrarrarra goting umta,*

*umta paja gomera banda tal*  
*tan paja potsa kakta,*  
*paja jol pongta uari atior jol pongta,*  
*gomera bandatal*  
*paja kuti mend deta,*  
*deta paja marta agatal hake*  
*Raurukan kara, kerat ropo*  
*Sonkuruwari ropo*  
*mauk satang*  
*Sola paja Pahandi Kupar Lingal yeotor,*  
*uannga yerung daruaya tendior*  
*tenda paja uanngun surseke dantor,*  
*sondan galka galka ropo kalan bajun*  
*surantor,*

*susta paja porainbay tirantor,*  
*tirita paja poraital Telangan khakehale*  
*mator*  
*maneke s'rang baru pitor,*  
*surseke dantor, sondan galkat ropo*  
*seti atior jaga sapre mata.*

*Mata paja dakne nri pantor,*

And exclaimed: "What a wicked deed!"

Then to the place like a mat he came,  
"What a wicked deed! Who can have eaten this?"

Looked for foot-prints, but footprints were none.

Stooping he looked, yet he found nothing

Looked, and jumped across the fence

No trace could he see; then crouched and looked,

Crawling he looked, but there was no trace,

Then he was troubled,

"Now what shall I do?" he said.

Now once again Lingal went and looked.

Stood up on the place where the rice was eaten

Saw the place of the spat-out food,

Saw the spittle like a guitar string:

"Where have you gone, you bloody bugger?"

Here and there he went looking,

Following the dribble like a guitar string,

Went to the boundary

Then to the dung-covered rock

Jumped from here to there,

Jumping he came on the foot-prints,

Then following the track went away.

In the valley Sonkuruwa

The sambars got wind of his coming.

"Stupid fool! I told you to stay here,

'Don't go!' I said, but you heard not your elder.

Now comes your lord,

He won't let you off with a beating."

So said Ramgeshri.

"I am not frightened,

Much have I eaten, but you who have fasted

Run now away. I will stay here."

So spoke Perageshri, the sambar

"You go, uncle, here I may meet my death."

So speaking he stayed, with tears they embraced each other,

1. *Laura* means 'penis' and *bahinchod* 'one who copulates with his sister'; both are Marathi swear words and used so commonly that—like the English words with which I have translated them—their meaning has been almost forgotten.

*pata paja; nadan kam ata,*

*tan wirsi pirp atsor jaga,*  
*nadan kam ata batal tinji mandar*

*koji surantor pata sile, koji sile*

*mursi surantor koji sile,*

*sure chahakna bandora kanbagli*  
*deiantor*

*sile koji diso; aske gabmurchi*

*bengseke suraner, sile koji*

*hate mator putu*

*inge bad witsar tunka, intorki*

*it paja nend sura Pahandi Kupar Lingal*  
*water,*

*tila jaga taga niltor.*

*potsa kakta jaga surantor,*

*surta paja jatursari atsor jol manta;*

*daki бага laurataga bahinchod<sup>1</sup>?*

*adam didam surseke sotor,*

*jatur wari atsor jol*

*surseke siwat poro sotor,*

*sota paja, gomera banda taga sotor*

*sota paja hagatal hake deitor,*

*deita paja kojik poro antor,*

*ata paja koji pesi dantor.*

*Sota paja Sonkuruwa dipun ropo*

*soneke gian sota maukunk.*

*Hatleka dushman mani mani iton*

*sonma iton babu kenjit silwi.*

*Ni babo wantor,*

*inge paia bigar sute kior*

*indeke Ramgeshri inta,*

*nana weriwana aion,*

*wele titon uton, nime upas manti*

*aske nime sodia nana mandanton,*

*inta Perageshri mau,*

*Nime sodia mama, nana nak saia puti,*

*injeke manta, undit kundi jome masi*  
*artang.*

Then Ramgeshri the sambar went off  
 Perageshri the sambar looked after  
 him, sadly,  
 From the corners of his eyes fell a  
 trickle of tears  
 Then came the flower born Lingal

Set up the gun rest before him  
 Looked through the gun sight  
 And saw Perageshri the sambar  
 Lifted the gun to his shoulder  
 Fired the gun and dead  
 Fell Perageshri the sambar  
 To the sambar went Lingal and  
 thought

'What shall I do with this sambar?'  
 Pondering he looked around  
 There on the hill tops  
 Who were the folk?  
 Making rake of split bamboo  
 There lived the folk of the Gaur  
 Aha Gaur and Maha Gaur  
 Reke Gaur and Durma Gaur  
 Four brothers were the Gaur folk  
 To them went the flower born Lingal

"When I approach them  
 What shall I tell them?"  
 A white leaved palas tree<sup>1</sup> he saw,  
 Entered the shade of its branches  
 Held the guitar of sixteen strings to his  
 chest  
 Played eighteen tunes and sixteen melo-  
 dies,

'What sweet tune is this?  
 Whose music may it be?' the Gaur  
 folk listened,  
 And hearing began spritely to dance,  
 Dancing they bent their knees and  
 hopped  
 Dancing they said What sweet  
 tunes!

This is the flower born Lingal's music  
 Then to that music they danced  
 Suddenly up stood the flower born  
 Lingal,  
 And then they saw Pahandi Kupar  
 Lingal,

'Gaurir I greet you luck be with you,  
 Ram, Ram' said Pahandi Kupar  
 Lingal

<sup>1</sup> *Bates frondosa* a tree with globose blossoms flowering in the hot weather and com-  
 monly known as flame of the forest

art paja Ramgeshri mau chole mata,  
 mata paja Perageshri mau paja paja  
 segi aranta,  
 tala kaner pid pod man kaner tonjna  
 mandi kita  
 hian galka Pahandi Kupar Lingal  
 yetor

yenta paja asur kaling mune uastor  
 astor paja muneta uasi surtor,  
 surti Perageshri maukun surtor  
 tina bujate dhanoban uastor,  
 dhanoban pator  
 janneke Perageshri mau arta  
 arta paja Pahandi Kupar Lingal sotor

sota paja tsatsola mau bad uisat lunka?  
 nchena hile hake surantor,  
 surta paja joro palat mania  
 hake bur manter?

lali uedut koti sauri kinter,  
 Gaurir manter  
 Aha Gauri Maha Gauri  
 Reke Gauri, Durma Gauri  
 nalur Gaurir manter  
 Uruga sotor, Pahandi Kupar Lingal  
 sator,

Sondan galka usikun,  
 ban tsapur kita?  
 Daural mur sapri kitor,  
 kita paja jur taga nengtor,  
 nengta paja sora paharana lorlamdi  
 satit poro umtor,  
 atra uajang sora demsang jatut pantor,

panke stal sobata uaja,  
 id bona uaja, Gaurir kenjter,

kenjta paja nend sura nand jote mata,  
 mata paja sarp sarp yendanter

yenda paja, kai sobata uaja,

Pahandi Kupar Lingna uaja and  
 nendu ad uajate yendanter,  
 yenta paja sargne Pahandi Kupar  
 Lingal telor,  
 tet paja Pahandi Kupar Lingal surter;

Gaurir nana alam kalam tapim takum,  
 Ram, Ram Pahandi Kupar Lingal



Girls, sisters seven, brought then gruel.  
Twenty tons of gruel made from sand,

Ten measures of cooked grain, hard as  
iron;

Then Pahandi Kupar Lingal looked  
up,

And said: "Gaur folk, listen!

I shot a young sambar

Now let us go. Cut up the meat

And carry away a front-leg

To Gudmasur Patera.

Now let us go!" Off went the Gaur

And cut up the sambar,

Then eight men carried the meat on a  
pole,

And Pahandi Kupar Lingal took

The road to Gudmasur Patera.

He reached Gudmasur Patera

And went to the chief's

Great palace.

In the palace courtyard

He put down a leg of the sambar,

But no one was there; so he

Took up the guitar of sixteen strings;

With fingers ringed with seals and  
silver

Pahandi Kupar Lingal plucked

The strings, and *jananana* the sound  
went forth.

Inside the palace was Manko,

"What sound is this?

This must be my nephew of Bijlipura,

This must be Pahandi Kupar Lingal."

Then Manko looked; at once she

Took off her ordinary clothes and

Dressed in new garments,

Then the ritual lamp with five flames,

Balls of millet and cow-dung,

And a brass pot with water she took,

In the fold of her *sari*, she carried a  
footstool.

And came out of the palace;

Coming into the courtyard

The girl put forth one foot

And scattered fragrant powder,

Putting forth the right foot, musk she  
scattered and powdered vermillion,

Seeing her thus Lingal thought:

"Splendid! uncle has done well  
Marrying this new aunt."

*Selar yerung peking jawa tatang  
jata paja Pahandi Kupar Lingal sur-  
tantor,*

*daha mankena poladna gugring;*

*jata paja Pahandi Kupar Lingal sur-  
antor*

*surta paja Gaurir kenjat!*

*nana undi mau dudu paton,*

*pata paja det, sot paja tan askmar,*

*askt paja Gudmasur Pterat ropo  
woimar.*

*keri bhujate woimar*

*nend det; Gaurir danter.*

*sondan gaika mausdun askanter,*

*askt paja at jau kauring tunganter*

*tunga paja Pahandi Kupar Lingal*

*Gudmasur Paterata sari pesitor.*

*Pesita paja Gudmasur Patera yeotor*

*yeota paja nendu andargande*

*mahalt ropo souji.*

*paikhaya darbar darbarte yeotor,*

*mauda kurki irtor,*

*irt paja bore silor;*

*aske sora paharana korlamdi tendan-  
tor;*

*Pahandi Kupar Lingal tendan gaika*

*sai-sika molurka muda jatika*

*latka waruska janana awas ata*

*andargande Manko mata,*

*manje id awas bona mandar?*

*Bijlipura maur bashal andur,*

*Pahandi Kupar Lingal andur.*

*Nendu bai surta, suran gaika*

*marla parana leno kali kita,*

*puna leno pehere mata,*

*mata paja marla bai panchamuk arti,*

*Sama sundi, barma sundi,*

*komandal jarite yer pita,*

*koda kutol chaurang sewne woti kita*

*andargandal bahari pesisi wanta,*

*bahari paikhaya darbar peisan gaika*

*bai undi kal waranta,*

*sawa buka turanta.*

*tina kal waranta kasturi gulal turanta*

*nehena surantor Pahandi Kupar*

*Lingal:*

*Warewa shabas mamal tungtor*

*puna anti tungtor.*

She, coming out, put down the foot stool.

"Come, nephew let me wash your feet."

He came the flower born Lingal,  
Put his foot down on the foot-stool  
And she washed his feet,  
Touched with old pearls the crown of his head

With new pearls she touched his forehead

Waved millet balls and balls of cow dung

Bowed to the ground touching his feet,  
"Don't do that aunt," said Lingal  
And gently drew up her head

By the hand she led him  
Into the house the great palace,  
Put out the bed with a hundred bells,  
Spread mattress and rug,  
Then lit incense at four corners,

And said "Sit down nephew"  
Betel from Chiknalgat  
Betel from Honkan  
Pan leaves from Ganari she gave him  
Tooth-reddening spice  
Tongue-burning lure, she gave him.  
Then asked Pahandi Kupar Lingal  
"Where is uncle?" The aunt replied

"Your uncle went to sit in his court,  
Perhaps you have not yet eaten,  
You my nephew may feel hungry,

A meal I will quickly prepare"  
Took red rice and white rice,  
Rice of the gods and  
Quickly she cooked the meal  
Then she looked outside and  
There was the leg of the sambar  
She carried it into the palace

Took a sickle of iron,  
And cut up the leg,  
In a golden bowl she gathered the pieces.

Meanwhile Pahandi Kupar Lingal  
Lay down on the bed with strings,  
Untied the scarf embroidered with  
Pearls, covered himself and snored

tan paja penta, pesu koda kutul uatta

uata basha kalk pankari kita,

uantor Pahandi Kupar Lingal  
koda kutul chaurangun porokal uantor,  
kalk pankari kita,  
parana motina seji bari kita,

puna motina tika sari kita,

sama sundi barma sundi surus uatta

uatta paja gapene kalk arta,  
kalk art paja mani ali  
kajar pus tehtor, Pahandi Kupar  
Lingal

andargande lai pus uata  
andargande mahali ropo  
nur jungkuna palang watta,  
uatta paja hatrun dulas kita,  
kita paja naon mulank udbari laxi  
kita,

kita paja, uda basha.  
Chiknalgarta chiknal supari  
Honkalgarta honka supari,  
Ganari akita urro nta,  
dat rangal kat,  
jib toral chuna uata  
nta paja Pahandi Kupar Lingal uor  
Mamal beke sotor? Ali nta

Alior mamal kacheri udien sotor,  
ahane mandanut marla  
naror sare mari karusan wari man-  
danur

sarpak tunka.  
kute wanjung bore uanpung  
pen nandan wanjung,  
jetun parkan tungana,  
Tungta paja bahari pesu suranta  
mauda kurki mania,  
Mata paja taranta, andargande tar-  
anta,  
poladna sefer puta,  
kurkitun aiskanta,  
soneta katara taga lorang tunga uat  
tanta

uatta paja Pahandi Kupar Lingal  
newari palangun poro mindarter,  
nayemen moting bari kita tela  
muts or ani muriantor,

"What she is like let me see.  
 Her real mind let me see," he thought.  
 With a sickle of iron she cut off the fat  
 In the golden bowl she cut it,  
 Put it into a pot of brass.  
 Then saw the water, deep red with  
 blood,  
 And said: "What shall I do with  
 this?  
 I can't throw it away, I, a *rakshasa*'s  
 daughter."  
 Then she looked here and there.  
 Saw Lingal, snoring loudly,  
 Snoring lay the nephew.  
 To her mouth she lifted the bowl,  
 Quickly, quickly she drank, and  
 After drinking swallowed four or five  
 lumps of the meat.  
 Having swallowed them, she put the  
 Brass pot on the hearth.  
 Then Pahandi Kupar Lingal rose.  
 And said to himself: What a wicked  
 deed!  
 This house is defiled.<sup>1</sup> and I  
 The priest of the fifty-six crores of  
 gods,  
 Cannot stay in the face of such sin.  
 "Aunt, uncle is out;  
 I am going to meet my uncle.  
 If I call, he will certainly come."  
 "Nephew, it is time for the court to  
 rise."  
 "No, I won't stay, I am going." He  
 rose,  
 Tied the sash round his waist,  
 Slung the guitar with sixteen strings  
 over the shoulder,  
 The gun-rest he grasped with the left  
 hand,  
 Put the gun Ramsari on his right shoul-  
 der,  
 And so left the palace.  
 The tiger-gate he passed,  
 Just as Raur dismissed the court  
 And was on his homeward way.  
 The one went in this direction,  
 The other came in that,  
 At the cattle's rest-place the two men  
 met,

*tena tsauk bahan mantake suŕka  
 tena niat suŕka intor.  
 poladna seŕede sawin askta,  
 soneta kaŕorale lorang lorang tungta,  
 sawin soneta kasandi taga waŕta  
 suŕta lal-barak yer distu,  
 ten bahan kika?  
 ten waŕon rakasana miar andan.*

*Aske ad yetun hike hake suŕta,  
 suŕsi Pahandi Kupar Lingal anteke  
 muriantor,  
 murineke mindtor saŕe mari.  
 ad kaŕora tordaga wota,  
 kachta sawa sawa uta,  
 uta paja awe nalung siyung lorang  
 mingta.  
 mingta paja kasandi wosi  
 sodet poro uhta.  
 uhneke Pahandi Kupar Lingal tetor  
 teta paja nadan kam!*

*rot ropo yengul ata,  
 sapankuri penkenor bhuŕpial andon,  
 nadan kam ata inge manmar aio  
 ati mamal waiweke sotor;  
 marla mamank beti danton.  
 dang ileke wanur.  
 Basha, kacherita wela teta.*

*Sile, manon. Danton nana taton,  
 tetsi totsdan naŕide dohtor,  
 sora paharana korlamdi tina bagla  
 jolta waŕtor,  
 asur kaŕing dema kaide piton*

*Ramsaŕi dhanoban tina seŕate kanstor,  
 kansta paja andargandal barari pesitor.  
 Bag mural wesi wirtor,  
 wiŕan gaŕka Raur kacheri parustor,  
 ane waseke mantor,  
 wasere maneke wer hindak dantor,  
 wor handak wantor,  
 gourdan goŕangte iwira mukabala anta,*

1. To Lingal Manko's predilection for blood and raw meat seemed horrible and inhuman: it betrayed her *rakshasa* origin and in his opinion defiled his uncle's house. This is entirely in accordance with the Indian view that food is something sacred and that the eating of the wrong kind of food is not an eccentricity but a social crime.

I salute you uncle,  
 Ram, Ram, Uncle, How are you  
 uncle?

Your people of Gudmasur Patara are  
 they all well?

Are the five brothers the grand ones  
 well?

Are the twelve kinsmen well?

Are the one and fifty sons well?

Is Sirivalav the first priest well?

Is Hirisuba well?

And you how are you all?

Your fifty seven gods are they  
 well?

Are the twelve threshing floors of  
 Gond gods well?"

After asking this Raur said

"Now let's go to my house

I have come from there now I go  
 home

I saw my aunt, who is grand,

To-day I am offering food to my gods.

A sambar calf I have shot  
 Some meat I have brought you,  
 To the aunt I gave it now I must  
 go."

If you must go at least smoke a pipe  
 Let us go to my house and drink  
 liquor

"Come to my house for a while" said  
 Raur

No I can't come uncle, I must be  
 going"

"Now, what are you saying?

Don't be so silly, let us go for a  
 moment"

"I won't come uncle"

"What work is so pressing, what is the  
 matter?"

And he grasped his hand, Lingal's hand  
 he grasped,

Raur took his hand and dragged him  
 "No, uncle, I won't come"

"No, of course, you must come, let us  
 go"

"No, I won't come" and he pulled back  
 his hand

The one pulled this way,

The other pulled that way,

This and that side they pulled,

As they struggled both became angry

*ata paja alam kalam tazani talam,  
 Ram, Ram, mama, tsakoŋ manti  
 mama?*

*Mua Gudmasur Patara samdi tsokoŋ  
 manter?*

*Tamun siur tadur tsokoŋ manterki?*

*Parenda jank kutahir tsokoŋ manterki?*

*Eluŋ putralur tsokoŋ manterki?*

*Sirivalatal katoral tsokoŋ mantorki?*

*Hirisukal tsokoŋ mantorki?*

*Maneke niŋur samdi tsokoŋ manter?*

*Maneke mua sapankun penk tsokoŋ  
 mantangk?*

*Parenda khaya hoya Was Penk tsokoŋ  
 mantangk?*

*Yendu pus kitor,*

*Ron dakt da*

*Nana sonji uaton, inge ron danton,*

*atin surton tsokoŋ manta,  
 mauang penkunk nend bojum dorwal  
 manta,*

*unde mau dudu pan maton,*

*talon sag tarhar talon,*

*ati naga siton, inge danton*

*Sotele sonbate jaraŋa chuta undkal,  
 jara ton sonji jara kal undkal,*

*ron yeunal dang, ineke*

*Nana uaton, mama, nana danton*

*ineke ad bata gohi warlanti?*

*Mecha, dang, gatkamend dang*

*It aian mama*

*Bata kam uati, ahan banhan anta?*

*Kai piton, Pahandi Kupar Lingalna kai  
 piton,*

*Raur kai pus umantor*

*Umneke uaton mama*

*Sile bahan gira mati, dang*

*Sile nana uaton, kai pus umantor*

*Wer hile umantor,*

*war hake umantor,*

*uaton war uantor,*

*uaton uator songunk uator,*

"To what house do you want me to come?"

Your house is defiled!

And I am a man of virtue,  
My gods too would be tarnished."

(So spoke Lingal and) Raur left his hand.

"You go, I too am going, uncle,  
Ram, Ram, uncle."

"Go then, nephew." So saying he bade him

Farewell; then *garrarrarra* he turned.

As he went to his house, the palace for gods,

From his heels the anger rose to the head,

From the head it went to the hand,

From the hand it went to the chest,

And blood reddened his eyes.

The red horse-whip he grasped.

Entered the palace and

With the left hand caught hold of Manko,

With the red-handled horse-whip he beat her

Without mercy, and Manko cried:

"My husband, to no one did I wink an eye,

To no one made a sign with my finger.

Did I sprinkle water on any one?

Husband, have you drunk liquor?

Have you eaten opium, or smoked hemp?

Raur have you gone mad?"

Senselessly he beat her (and shouted):

"Be off with you! go to some distant land!"

Out into the front yard he dragged her,

Turning she entered again through the back;

But his wrath did not die,

Again he dragged her into the courtyard.

Thus one and two days passed.

"I am not a cow or a bull,

How can I stand being beaten like a horse?

To whom shall I turn? Who will advise me?

The fourteen thousand Raur are subject to him

To whom shall I go then?

*wata paja; batalk ran waimar?*

*Niwa ron yengul ata!*

*ata paja nana niyatdar andon*

*nawan penk bate manung.*

*Kai suti kitor.*

*Nime dang, nana danton, mama,*

*Ram, Ram, mama.*

*Son basha. Inmaŋki sar tungtor*

*sar kitor; gararrarra maltor.*

*Andargand demahalte wanneke,*

*ŋakata song matate warta,*

*matata song mangate warta,*

*mangata song satit warta,*

*warata paja netur sunding kanŋk atang.*

*Lalkan korŋa pitor,*

*andargande nengtor,*

*Mankon pitor, ŋema kaide pitor*

*sodia!*

*lalkau korŋata mar warse mata,*

*bedmar ata, manneke;*

*Saibaloka bouke bontorŋon kanŋ paimar*

*sile,*

*bouke boŋa sutmaŋ sile.*

*Nana bouke yer rosŋta sile?*

*Saibaloka, nendu kal uti?*

*Nendu hapu titi, ganja uti?*

*Raurte bari pisere mati?*

*Bedmar warse mata;*

*mata paja pesisi sodia! mulukun poro*

*munc ratsatenk yerisi waŋantor,*

*waŋneke pera ratsate tirisi nengta*

*nengta paja sile song dare maior.*

*munc ratsate yerisi waŋantor.*

*waŋneke unde dia ata rand diang atang,*

*aian doria dana aion nana; koŋaŋind,*

*bedmar бага yeunal sosi kika?*

*bonaga daka? bor akal budi wehanur?*

*Chauda hazar Raurk wen kaliter*

*Manje bonaga daka?*

The five brothers, the grandsons are  
subject to him  
The twelve kinsmen are subject to  
him,  
The one-and-twenty sons are subject  
to him,  
To whom shall I go?  
Sirivalaval the clan next is subject  
to him."  
To speak a few words with Hirasuka,  
The Pardhan's counsel to hear, she  
went,  
Went to Hirasuka's quarter  
Her precious robe of yellow silk torn to  
rags  
"What shall I do now?"  
She entered the quarter of Hirasuka,  
On his veranda sat Hirasuka,

Sat on a stool of gold.  
The house Pardhan's wife saw her,  
And called "Listen, old man!  
The patroness is coming!"  
Garrarrara, he looked up  
"Mother I salute you,  
By Benares and the god's place I salute  
you.  
Mother, what is the matter,  
Crying and weeping why and whence  
have you come?"  
"Why and whence have I come?  
Whatever the reason, I have commit-  
ted no fault,  
Yet your patron beat me mercilessly  
For full four days.  
'Get out' he says, what makes him  
beat me?  
A wicked brute he is."  
"What a senseless fool to beat you!  
Let us go! I will come,  
I'll teach him some sense!"  
Hirasuka made himself ready,  
With water he washed,  
Put on a silken loin-cloth,  
Hanuman like he tied it tightly,  
Then placed the jewelled head-dress  
On his head, and was ready  
In shirt and coat and twelve knotted  
vest  
Hirasuka was ready  
His wealth the gifts of patrons  
Twisted armlets silver bracelets,  
Gangajam armlets he slept on,

Tamun sattu sadur wen kaliter,  
parenda jank kutalit wen kaliter  
ekhas putral e wen kaliter  
bonaga dala?  
Sirivalaval hatara won kalitor

Jarasa kensjeke Hirasukal Patari  
sand gohting kensjen danta

Hirasukana warate danta,  
sondan galka agajar pitambar dunki  
an sota  
Bad utsar tunka?  
Hirasukana warate sonja mata,  
deomahal sonses sapalite Hirasukal uti  
mantor,  
sorela malin uti mantor,  
Rota Patari wolat surta,  
surta paja, Aikelas burga  
danini ali  
Garrarrara malin surantor,  
surta paja, baya auya jahar,  
Kanyahar, wara-ras jahar,

baya beke bahan,  
arje kopter beke bahan

Bahan beke wamar?  
beke manje batal nana batas pap tung  
mar nile,  
nikor dani bedmar pator  
nalung rock ator  
Pesan sodia, injeke, bari pamar  
mandar?  
Jol lekal andur  
Kare manar lekal pator?  
Dang nana uantian,  
akal budi uehantan?  
Hirasukal saure mantor,  
angora arhtan antor,  
kosmarengina dhotreta langar suti kilor,  
Hanuman katta wota umtor,  
umneke batal anta kang tura  
talade dahar, saure mantor  
Hirasukal yekati kurta

dohari bandi saure mantor,  
Dhanur nia rauhah,  
gumuk snuk gangajamne  
kareng kerantor,

Fastened the silver-belt Nayamtaras  
 round his waist,  
 Put on the pearl-beset ear-rings  
 Took Hirabai, the fiddle, on his shoulder,  
 Grasped the spear Kaniyal, and  
 Said: "Now let us go, mother!"  
 She walked ahead, behind came Hirasuka,  
 They took the path to the palace,  
 Went to the door of the palace for gods.

At the gate he bowed in salute,  
 Then he passed through the gate,  
 And entered the courtyard,  
 Greeted once more in the courtyard;  
 The wise patroness brought water  
 In the narrow-necked brass-jug,  
 In the jug she gave water to Hirasuka,  
 The leg of the fiddle Hirabai he  
 washed,

And then he washed his own feet.  
 The clever patron Dundria Raur,  
 Gave him a mat to sit on,  
 Then Hirasuka sat down.  
 Raur gave him leaf-pipe and tobacco,  
 And Hirasuka filled a pipe;  
 Then he smoked his pipe.  
 The god-like men spoke divine words.  
 The king-like men spoke royal words,  
 From one to the other flowed speech:  
 "Fool, what has my patroness done?  
 Why do you beat her?  
 Madman, don't beat her like that!  
 Are you out of your senses?"  
 "I won't beat her again, grandfather."  
 "All right then."—A whole day passed  
 And on the next morning  
 Giving him five pearls and diamonds  
 Raur bade him farewell.

Bade, Hirasuka, farewell.  
 Then went Hirasuka to his own  
 quarter,  
 He had hardly gone when Raur started  
 beating again.  
 "Get out, away with you bitch."  
 "To what land shall I go?  
 I have no mother, I have no father?  
 To whom shall I go?" The beating  
 continued.

"Now to whom shall I go?"  
 She went to the seven Panior brothers,  
 "This is a great man's wife," they said,

*Nayam taras kaḍdora nani dostor,*

*yekhambu tsaubari kertor,  
 Hirabai kikri seṭate kanjtor,*

*kanja paja Kaniyal gorka kaide pitor,  
 pita paja; dang baia!  
 munc ata, tan paja Hirasukal*

*andar gandeta sari chale mator,  
 waian wakatne deomahal andargan  
 darwaza sotor,*

*darwazatan batwing tungtor,  
 tungta paja darwaza wiṭtor,  
 sonsai darbarte sotor,  
 sota paja darbarta batwing kitor,  
 akalwanti daital lohumandal  
 jarite yer tendsi mata,  
 jari men yer Hirasukan sita,  
 kal pankari Hirabaina kitor,*

*tsauta tanwa kalk pankari kitor,  
 Akalwanti dhani Dundria Raur  
 sukwaisal tsapra sitor,  
 sita paja Hirasukal utor,  
 ut paja chutaki; tanuk sitor Raur  
 Hirasukal chuta niḥtor;  
 niḥta paja nend chuṭa, utor,  
 uneke deolokuran deogoḥting  
 rajlokuran rajgoḥting atang,  
 aneke ineke goḥtiit agro goḥti pesitang  
 Hatleka dhanini batal kita?  
 Tan bari paimar?  
 Leka pisa rozgar mani paima!  
 Buyani andi?  
 Paion tado, inge.*

*Bes manta, char paharan mata  
 mata paja imneti sakre,  
 siyung hirang moting sisi sar tunktor,*

*Hirasukan sar tungtor,  
 tungta paja Hirasukal tanwa warate  
 sotor,  
 sota paja nend unde marla tsauta bed-  
 mar pantor,  
 Pesodia, niwa maicha,  
 Nana bad muluk daka  
 nak sile yayal, nak sile babal?  
 Bonage daka bedmar anta,*

*Nend bonage daka?  
 Tamun yerwir Paniur naga sota,  
 soneke nend ḍagur lokuna*

"She cannot stay here with us."  
 Bodice and *sari* in friendship they gave  
 her  
 'Keep this strand of hair,' said Manko,  
 And from her head 'he took a lock.  
 Then the Panur led her back to  
 Gudmasur Patera. "Now don't beat  
 her  
 I will not beat her" said Raur  
 Having said "I won't beat," he bade  
 them farewell,  
 And they went home  
 Then again he beat her

To whom shall I go?<sup>1</sup>  
 To Jinkinar Minkinar Jantokorveliki  
 nagur,  
 To the Voja folk, to Kounda Voja she  
 went,  
 They gave her bodice and *sari*  
 Then they too led her back.  
 'Now where shall I go?'  
 I will go to the four brothers,"  
 To Tipikinar Ramtekmurista

Taragamni Dakanbamni she went,

Respectfully they greeted her  
 Then gave her bodice and *sari*,  
 "Keep this hair strand with you," said  
 Manko

From her head she took a lock.<sup>1</sup>  
 Then the four brothers conducted her  
 home.

"Now what shall I do?"  
 If he does not listen what shall I do?"  
 Then Raur took a basket, put in  
 Two measures of grain, a quarter seer  
 Chulhas and a small measure of salt,  
 Garlic and turmeric he tied up in a  
 bundle,  
 Then made ready a vessel of oil,

Gave her a sickle and  
 Putting the carrying pad on her head,  
 Dragged her out by the hand  
 And lifted the basket on to her head.  
 "Go!" he said and dragged her out,  
 "Go your way, take the road—  
 To the land of the sunrise, and stay  
 there you bitch!"

*bako nendu manma, iter,*  
*Tson dikri doster,*

*Dasta paja, singar mani ita Manko,*  
*talade shingar tendri sita*  
*sita paja Panur marla tain doster*  
*Gudmasur Patera Inge paima*

*Pason intor,*  
*Ita paja pason, tsaula urun sar kitor,*

*kita paja aur soler,*  
*sota paja unde marla tsaula bedmar*  
*anta*

*bonage daka?*  
*Jinkinar Minkinar Jantokorveliki rapa*  
*sota*

*Kounda Vojalir Kounda Vaja naga*  
*soni mala*

*marla paja ur tson dikri doster,*  
*ur tain doster*  
*Inge banage daka?*

*Tamun nalur aga daka,*  
*Tamun nalur Tipikinar Ramtek*  
*murista*

*Taragamni Dakanbamni uraga soni*  
*mala,*

*mala paja ur man mareda tungler,*  
*tunkta paja tsari dikri doster,*  
*dasta paja shingar mani ita Manko,*

*talade shingar tendri sita,*  
*sita paja tamun nalur marla tain*  
*doster,*

*dasta paja, inge banaga daka,*  
*shin kenjo, soni batal kika?*  
*Marla undi topia uon kin,*  
*sand gadang danang, sauwa ser*  
*murtang, chutimen sazar gate kitor,*  
*lasan kamkan dohtor,*

*dohta paja marla unde kopate ni sauri*  
*kitor,*

*undi seter sitor,*  
*sini chumar kitor*

*kita paja kai pin yeruke tator,*  
*tata paja tana talat poro topia totustor,*  
*Son itor, kai pin yeruke tator,*  
*sari son sari pin son*  
*pori penial mulukun ropo son pisa*  
*hatrande!*

<sup>1</sup> The black chequer associated with the Persa Pru of some four-brother clans are believed to represent Manko's hair given by her as a gift to the four brothers at Ramtek Baston.



"What a fate!" Her tears fell  
 She sobbed and cried:  
 "Fate is against me,  
 I have no mother, I have no father,  
 To whom shall I go?"  
 Weeping she went her way.  
 Your god Manko slowly walking went  
 to the village boundary.  
 Remembered that she was pregnant  
 three months.  
 "I'll tell of it first, then I'll go." She  
 took down  
 The basket; quickly she turned  
 And went to Hirasuka's quarter,  
 "Now I am going, brother-in-law Hira-  
 suka,  
 The four kin-groups have failed me,  
 Now that they've failed me,  
 I am going, brother-in-law,  
 But not without telling you,  
 That, whether girl or boy, I carry a  
 child of three months,  
 I am going, having spoken I go."  
 With tears falling, she went  
 Went to the village boundary,  
 Lifted the basket on to her head,  
 Went to the land of the sunrise,  
 One day, and two days passed,  
 The husbandless woman is not safe in  
 the forest,  
 So the lonely girl walked fast.  
 Four days passed, five days passed,  
 Six days passed, seven days passed,  
 Eight days passed, a fortnight passed,  
 One month passed,  
 Then two months passed,  
 Three months passed and then  
 Four months and five months,  
 Six months passed,  
 Then she reached the land of the sun-  
 rise.  
 Twelve homesteads of peasants and  
 labourers there were.  
 Among them she settled.  
 As daily labour, one strip of field she  
 took on,  
 Each took one strip  
 Then to reap jawari she took on two;  
 "Ababa! whose wife may this be?  
 Whose daughter may this be?  
 How much work she is doing!"  
 When nine months, nine days,  
 And nine hours were full,

*Nasibni tala kaner pid pođ  
 man kaner ronjna mandī kita;  
 Nasibne nak sile  
 auwal nak sile, babo nak sile,  
 bonaga daka?  
 Arseke chale mata.  
 Niwa Raitar Manko soneke soneke  
 siwat poro sota,  
 yadi kita mund mahinana garb manta,*

*wehtsi daka, ade topla bud rehta*

*rehta paja bahan bai garrarrarra malta,  
 malsi Hirasukana wayate wanta,  
 wata paja, nendū bawa Hirasuka*

*nalung saganur haŕe mater,  
 inge samdir haŕe mater,  
 danton inge nawa, bawa, naŕita  
 weheweke daka kaia antaio  
 paŕdi antaio, mund mahinana garb  
 manta.  
 danton wehtsi tohtsi danton.  
 bai gada gada arseke chale mata,  
 sondan gaŕka siwat poro sota,  
 topla tosta chale mata,  
 poŕđ pesiwal desum chale mata  
 undi dia ata, rand diang ata  
 ata paja rande baiko keŕate muido,*

*mane baiko palate chale mata,  
 nalung diang ata, siyung diang ata  
 sarung diang ata, yerung diang ata  
 at diang ata, at bag paŕdera waŕa undi  
 mahina ata,  
 ata paja rand mahinang ata,  
 mund mahinang ata, aneke  
 nalung mahinang ata, siyung mahinang  
 sarung mahinang ata,  
 ata paja poŕđ pesiwal desum yeosi  
 mata.  
 Bara rohk raiyata buitalir,*

*wur toŕo joŕ arta,  
 arta paja buti dhandate wori pianta,*

*samdir wokok wori pianter,  
 idu rand woring arusanta;  
 ababa, bona baiko mandar?  
 id bona peđgi mandar?  
 Ihin bahan kam tungmar;  
 Maneke nau mahinang, nau diwos  
 nan gaŕkang nintang,*

She went to the step-well,  
Took with her pot and bucket  
Gargled and spat, cleansed her mouth,  
Then filled the water pot.  
What happened thereafter?  
Pains came in her back and her hips,  
They hurt, and pain gripped her body,  
What said the child in her womb?

' If I come through the vagina, she'll  
say I passed urine,'

If I come through the rectum, she'll  
say I defecated

If I come through the mouth she'll  
say clearing my throat I spat him  
out'

The crown of her head opened and he  
sprang forth,

A royal boy was born and  
The mother said What a beautiful  
god like child'

She took the boy and from  
Thirty two breasts she fed him

' What shall I do with the boy?

Without husband what shall I do?

Whose child is this boy?

The whole world will ask,

Now what shall I do with the boy?"

She suckled him then took him by the  
legs

Into the step-well she dropped

The boy by the legs,

The boy fell into the water,

Yewelag Bodiwelag,

Kamkawelag, the water sprites were  
there,

And caught the boy in a sarī

But the child cried, ceaselessly,

They put him into a golden cradle,

What then did they do?

A song they began to sing

"Don't cry! jo jo, my son"

But the boy would not quiet,

"Jo jo, be quiet son,

Yours is a village,"

When they told of his village, the boy  
was quietened

\*Gudmarur Patara is yours,

Yad Raur, the grandsire is yours,

Jugat Raur, the father is yours,

Serma Raur and Dundria Raur,

Fourteen thousand Raur, Dundria  
Raur

nendu barua takana kuhī taga  
hel pisi gala pisi sonji mata,  
arla gurla kita, todi pankari kita  
kian galka tsauta gala murusta,  
Murust paja batal anta?

Karkne nari nonta,  
nanta paja tsiklale gae gute mata.  
Batal anta garb inta'

Nartu arteke urksi watton, indar

maidantenk arteke pelkon indar,

tardk arteke karkur tungsu ushtan

Nesh tikri pati pestor,

rajtural pedal janma ata  
ata paja aual, inta, batal sobator  
pedal deual

pedan yeta, yeta paja  
batus bomkena pal uuhanta,  
uahta paja pedal manji batal kika?  
marsur silca batal kika?

manje ner pedal bona pir tungta?  
paidas indanur duriya,  
nendu uer pedan batal kika?  
pal uhta aae kalkun pita,

pita paja barua takana kuhitaga,  
pedan kalk pin warta  
uainke pedal jait ropo martor,  
Yeuelag Boduwelag  
lanikawelag mantang,

mata paja Yeuelag patau se lun ropo  
natang

li ata paja nend pedal lar piton narmor,  
arta paja soneta dolara mandi kitang,  
kita paja batal kitang?

pata wop kitang,  
Arma weta jo jo beta  
pedana larke tame maior,  
mamake jo jo beta  
nira nagur manta,  
nagurna porol mutneke pedal dantor,

aneke Gudmarur Patara rila,  
Tad Raur jado nitor,  
Jugat Raur babo nitor  
nendu Serma Raur Dundria Raur,  
chauda hazar Raurh, Dundria Raurh

Your father, yours the five brothers,  
 the grandsires,  
 The fourteen fathers, the twelve kins-  
 men,  
 All kin-groups, one-and-twenty sons,  
 Your kin they all are,  
 Sirivalaval is the clan-priest,  
 Hirasuka is the Pardhan."  
 Pleased was the boy,  
 In a swing of twelve chains he lay,

One month, two months old he was,  
 Three months old he was,  
 Four months old he was,  
 Five months old he was,  
 Six months old he was,  
 Seven months old he was,  
 Eight months old he was,  
 Nine months old he was,  
 Ten months old he was,  
 Twelve months, one year old he was,  
 Two years and three years,  
 Four years, five years, six years,  
 Seven years, eight years, nine years,  
 Ten years, eleven years, twelve years,  
 A boy of twelve years he was.  
 "Now I'll go to Gudmasur Patera,"  
 he said,  
 "Yewelag, Bodiwelag, I am going  
 mother,  
 To Gudmasur Patera I'll go,  
 How it is, I will see."  
 The richest his splendour surpassed,  
 The powerful Katriputor,  
 Ketrisaral Badesaral, what did he do?  
 On the boundary of Gudmasur Patera  
 With a spider's web he girt the village,  
 Thus stopped all rain;  
 No rain fell for three years,  
 All water vanished,  
 In the wells was no water,  
 For want of water the cattle died,  
 Without water and grazing, they died,  
 The buffaloes perished.

Thousands of cattle died,  
 Twelve herds of buffaloes perished,  
 Twelve flocks of sheep perished,  
 Twelve flocks of goats perished,

Without water life fled;  
 In the wells was no water,  
 They went to the wells,

*niwa babo, tamun siwir tadur niwor,*  
*chauda jank babur, parenda jank kur-*  
*alir niwor,*  
*ser saga ekwis putralir niwor,*  
*niwa ser saga niwa,*  
*Sirivalaval kaṭoraḷ mantor,*  
*Hirasukal Paṭaṭi mantor.*  
*Peḍal kushi ator,*  
*ata paṭa bara dandkena ukar poro*  
*mantor,*  
*uud mahina, rand mahinaug antor*  
*mund mahinang antor,*  
*nalung mahinang antor,*  
*siyung mahinang antor,*  
*sarung mahinang antor,*  
*yerung mahinang antor,*  
*aṭ mahinang antor,*  
*nau mahinang antor,*  
*daha mahinang antor,*  
*bara mahinaṇa undi sal antor,*  
*rand salk, mund salk aneke*  
*nalung salk, siyung salk, sarung salk,*  
*yerung salk, aṭ salk, nau salk,*  
*daha salk, akara salk, bara salk,*  
*bara warsana bar jani ata.*  
*Gudmasur Paṭeṭa daka injeri intor,*

*Yewelag, Bodiwelag nana danton baie*

*Gudmasur Paṭeṭa daka,*  
*batal mantaio surka.*  
*Anmasti danmasti raishad wiṛta.*  
*wer bara Ketripuṭtor,*  
*Ketrisaral Badesaral batal kintor?*  
*Gudmasur Paṭeṭatun taua siwat*  
*gopera nul gundi kintor,*  
*pirḍun akri kintor;*  
*mund salk pir art sile arwak ata.*  
*aske yehek ate matang.*  
*mata paṭa kuhi naga yer sile,*  
*sikwak ateke yetwin dor dankar sauta,*  
*yetwin tsarowin saseke mantaug,*  
*mata paṭa yerming martang sase khak*  
*atang.*  
*siwulakh dau martang*  
*parenda karpa yerming martang*  
*parenda karpa goreng martang,*  
*marta paṭa parenda karpa hereng*  
*martang*  
*yetwin paran danta;*  
*kuhi taga yer sile,*  
*kuhi taga danter,*

Hard they pulled to draw water,

Climbed down into the well,  
No water was there. Thus passed  
three years,

In the treasure chest coins darkened,  
In the storehouse millet turned to ashes  
Then what should be done?"

A pair of goats to the gods they offered  
To the rain gods a pair of buffalo-bulls  
But it did not rain

What shall we do?"  
A pair of cows they gave,  
But no rain came

What is the matter, to which god shall  
we go?

To the fiery Kosejarta Jangu Bai, the  
goddess they went,  
Taking horned goats with white fore  
heads

And five measures of rice,  
With five pearls and five diamonds  
To Jangu Bai they went.

"There is no rain in the village," they  
said,

Then, inspired by Jangu Bai, the  
clan priest spoke

"Have you not by chance twelve years  
ago,

Driven away a woman?" he said

"Whichever woman it was, you must  
bring her back,

Else there will be no rain

And there will be no hope for your  
cattle.

No rain will come, unless you do as  
I say"

Back they went to the village,  
Then the five brothers, the grandsires,  
The fathers and twelve kinsmen,

All gathered together  
Sirivalaval the clan priest, and  
Hirasuka Pardhan came together

"Which woman have we turned out?"  
Then they all said

"Ra *ra wisa* *ra wisa* —"

"

"

"

"

"

"

"

*yer shendi kaneke poro uatneke huska  
pater,  
patu buduantor kuhitaga uatanter,  
sile yer mund uatsang ulang*

*takatang rupiang korseng antang  
bakarina janang nir antang  
Aia paja bad witsar tungana?  
jora jaja bakrang penk tunganter,  
pir penk jora hailalik penk tunganter,  
Sile pir uao*

*bad witsar junkam?  
jora jora sungas sintor  
sile per uao*

*Ihin bahan ata bad pen daga dakat?*

*Agindur Kasejartar Jangu Bai Raitar  
tanaga soter,  
lahkuatang chandrauk bakrang pin,*

*nyung gadang perek, nyung moting  
nyung hirang pin soter,  
Jangu Bai noga sonji  
Masua naje pir waisa, inpi,*

*ua paja Jangu Bai nor katoral wor  
intor,  
Mirai basketere bara uatsang atij*

*ata paja bad undi uelon pesun purtit?  
intor,  
bad uelon mandar tan sonji tateke*

*bahan ahan fir uao  
nua dor dandal piwar tsauta uamar,*

*nuku pir uaisa, aske anta aueke aio*

*marla tsauta nate uamar,  
uata paja lamun suir tedur,  
chauda jank babur, parenda jan  
kuralir,*

*atsuar mire maimar  
Sirivalaval kataral,  
Hirasuka Patar mire maimar,  
bad uelon maraf purstiat  
marla inter,*

*Rauyta baiko Mankon pursitor,  
tan sanje fialake anta  
yan bar sonji tarana?  
ban torone aio aske bon ketana?*

*Hirasuka Patarin leimar*

Hirasuka, the Pardhan, let us send

Go and fetch Manko,  
Then all will be well."

"To which land shall I go?

To which tract shall I go?"

"In whatever tract she lives, there you shall go."

Hirasuka was ready.

Took Hirabai, his fiddle, on his shoulder,

Grasped the spear Kaniyal, and

Tied up the food-giving vessel:

"I am going, master, within twelve years I'll return."

"So I told you," said Raur. Hirasuka set out.

He roamed the lands of the Deccan,  
Searched all the southern quarter,  
Searching, he stayed there one month,  
Two months he searched the Deccan,  
Nothing he found there, and he left the Deccan.

Roamed through the Mogulayi lands,  
Three months he searched,

Four and five months he searched,

Six months he searched.

Then he entered the eastern sphere

Without a trace for one year

Without a trace for two years,

Without a trace for three years,

Without a trace for four years,

Without a trace for five years,

Without a trace for six years,

Without a trace for seven years,

Without a trace for eight years,

Without finding a trace he had roamed the three quarters.

Eight years and ten years he roamed

The Pardhan returned not.

Then which sphere did he enter?

He entered the south eastern sphere,

Great people lived there,

But for twelve years past,

No Pardhan had come (to their villages):

"If any should come

Rich gifts we will give him," so those Gonds said.

Twelve years had passed,

When the Pardhan entered a village

In the south-eastern sphere

He walked (through the streets) scanning man after man,

*Mankon sonji keisi tara,  
tata paja tsokoŋ ailen manta.*

*bad muluk injeke daka,*

*bad taluqa injeke daka?*

*bade taluqa mani baje sonmar.*

*Hirasukal saure maimar,*

*mata paja Hirabai kikri setate yetmar,*

*Kaniyal gorka kaide pimar,*

*anpurial jari gaŋi kimar;*

*Danton, bapu, bara warsane waimar.*

*Nana inmar. Hirasukal pesimar.*

*Pesita paja nend dakinkon welimar*

*welita paja dakinkon mahakmar,*

*mahakta paja undi mahina antor,*

*rand mahinang dakinkon mahktor,*

*sile puŋta, sile dakinkon suti kitor.*

*Mogulayikon welimar,*

*mund mahinang antor,*

*nalung mahinang siyung mahina antor,*

*sarung mahinang antor,*

*Purbukon nengtor,*

*sile jara undi sal ator,*

*sile jara rand salk ator,*

*sile jara mund salk ator,*

*sile jara nalung salk ator,*

*sile jara siyung salk ator,*

*sile jara sarung salk ator,*

*sile jara yerung salk ator,*

*sile jara arolat salk ator,*

*sile jara mund konk martang,*

*Aŋ salk ator, daka salk ator,*

*sile Paŋari marla waior.*

*Bad konde nengantor?*

*Panchan kon nengantor,*

*dagu daguk manter,*

*bara warsang atang,*

*baga Paŋari waior;*

*mahaga wateke momoŋ wenku*

*wele sikom, Koitur inter.*

*Iteke bara warsang ator,*

*aneke undi panehankon nagurt ropo nengtor*

*Paŋari nengta paja ad sonsai,*

*maneke mainang mainank tarib tung-seke dantor,*

Then suddenly on a veranda  
 He saw her grinding wheat,  
 On a veranda sat Manko  
 Grinding wheat for wages<sup>1</sup>  
 There she was! 'Aha!' he exclaimed  
 Now her eye fell on the Pardhan,  
 And seeing him there she thought  
 This in his precious silk robe, is my  
 brother in law the Pardhan,  
 My sarī flap I must tie!<sup>2</sup>  
 Now what did she do for a flap?  
 Here and there she looked, picked up  
 a rag to tuck in as a flap<sup>3</sup>  
 Looking straight ahead Hirasuka saw  
 her,  
 Ha! Isn't this she?'  
 He exclaimed, while she went on grind-  
 ing the wheat.  
 After grinding she gathered the flour  
 And went to the east of the village  
 As she walked off Hirasuka followed  
 Following he went with her  
 All people all villagers,  
 Elders and great patels said  
 "What a fool is this Pardhan,  
 To run after that woman  
 Following the bitch he runs off"  
 Her home was a hut of castor stalks  
 And he followed her there  
 In a cracked gourd she took water,  
 And broke into violent weeping  
 "Why have you come brother in law?  
 Have you come to look on my  
 misery?"  
 Thus the four watches passed  
 He stayed one day,  
 He stayed two days,  
 'I have come to take you away,  
 Go with me' he said  
 'No I won't come, brother in law,'  
 she said,  
 Beseechingly Hirasuka urged her,  
 But to all urging she only said  
 "No I won't come"  
 'Come with me,' Hirasuka said,  
 Beseechingly, he urged her

*soneke sonsai sajalite nehene surantor,  
 gohku norseke manta,  
 sapalite Manko chite mend  
 gohku mors ke manta,  
 Manege, ahaha stor,  
 Patayi inke nehena uorke mata,  
 manche uorke maian gatika  
 Patari baal andor,*

*Agajar istambar sogā na ta dohla'  
 Soga inke batal jita?  
 Hindang handang gindang mirhisi sogā  
 dohta,  
 dohneke nehna surantor, Hirasuka  
 surache,  
 Are' id bahana bate ide and?  
 Intorhi gohku nosta*

*Nort paja findi urpta,  
 urpta paja naten suraying penia  
 Pesinke tan paja Hirasuka penior  
 jenta paja tan paja dantor  
 uer nahin nagurlokur  
 dagur dagurk pallalir inter,  
 Uer pisa Patari andur,  
 tan paja dantor,  
 hatuena bostapandir ten paja dantor  
 Ineke ncrunda bongana gurse manta,  
 mateke tan paja sotor,  
 sota paja uorta purkate yer tendia,  
 gada gada arnen bigri mata  
 Nime bari uali Patari baal?  
 Nend naxa gosa surnen wati?*

*Ita char pahar batu gatkan mata  
 Undi dia ator mantor,  
 rand diang ator,  
 mantor бага niñun poilen waton,  
 nime dang intor  
 Ineke nana ualon baal, inta,*

*yekhat Hirasuka lagtor,  
 Lagan gatika, ualon inta,*

*uer Hirasuka dang intor,  
 yekhat lagtor*

1 Laterally per measure *chi* being a small measure of capacity

2 According to old Gond custom a married woman should tie up the back flap of her sarī in a particular way in the presence of her husband's elder brother as a sign of respect. Nowadays this custom is only observed on certain ceremonial occasions. In the above episode Hirasuka as the House-Pardhan of Dundra Raur stands to Manko in the position of elder brother in law and is treated accordingly but Manko's sarī is so poor and short that it has no flap and she tucks in a rag to comply with the custom.

"That day he drove me away,  
If I return now, once more he will  
drive me away,"

"No, that he won't do," he said.

Then she made ready.

Making her go in front, Hirasuka  
followed behind,

Thus they went.

She walking ahead, he brought her,

One month passed,

Two months passed,

Three months passed,

Four months passed,

He came to the road to Gudmasur  
Patera;

Five months going,

Six months coming,

Gudmasur Patera he reached.

At the village-border she said:

"If your patron needs me tell him to  
come,

"Let him come with trumpets and  
drums,

"Only then will I come."

With these words she sat down under a  
*dondera* tree:

Leaving her, Hirasuka entered the  
village,

Entered Raur's house, the great place.

"Lord, I salute you.

"In the name of Benares and the god's  
sacred place I salute you"

Thus Hirasuka approached

"Now what news has he brought?"

Exclaimed Dundria Raur, and gave him  
a brass jug of water;

Hirasuka first washed the 'leg' of  
Hirabai, his fiddle,

Then he washed his own feet.

Raur gave him a mat to sit on,

Gave him pipe and tobacco,

Then Hirasuka smoked his pipe.

"What have you achieved?"

"Have I not brought her! Let there  
be music."

All was made ready,

The Raur folk beat the great drums

Then sounded the disk-drums,

Two trumpets blew,

Kettle-drums thundered,

Bugles rang out.

*Ad neti nakun pesusi purtit  
nendu unde woki unde pesusi purkit*

*Ineke pesusi puron injere, saure mata.*

*Munc kitor Hirasukal paja ator,*

*ata paja danton.*

*Munc kisi wosok mantor,*

*undi mahina ator,*

*rand mahinang ator,*

*mund mahinang ator,*

*nalung mahinang ator,*

*Gudmasur Patetata sari wasike;*

*siyung mahinang soncke,*

*sarung mahinang wancke,*

*Gudmasur Patetata ropo wasi mator.*

*Siwat poro wasi manta:*

*Niwor dhaninku khas mandar te  
waiyir*

*munek waja gaja pesi waiyir,*

*wata paja nana nate waka,*

*Waka injere siwat poro dondera mara  
bud uta;*

*uta paja Hirasukal Patari nagur tropo  
nengtor,*

*nengta paja Raurta ron andargande  
nengtor.*

*Bapu diwanjahar,*

*Kasijahar, warawarjahar.*

*Hirasukal wator.*

*Nendu bata khabur tator?*

*injikun, kohomandal jarite yer sitor;*

*yer sita paja nend Hirabai kikrita kal-  
pankari kitor,*

*tsanta tanwa kalk-pankari kitor.*

*Kita paja sukwasal tsaupra sitor,*

*chutaki tamuk sitor,*

*sita paja chuta sitor.*

*Batal bahan kiti?*

*Sile sonji taton! waja gaja ai.*

*Saura manter*

*Raurk jangi dolkena waja anta,*

*kanki dapna suraug antang,*

*ata paja joza peprena waja anta,*

*nagara nek anta,*

*bereka ronjanta.*

At once the five brother grandfathers  
gathered,

One and twenty sons gathered,

Twelve kinsmen gathered

Handsome Sirivalaval the clan priest  
came,

Relations and clansmen all came to-  
gether

Why was there music, they came to see

Meanwhile at the village boundary

Under the *dondera* tree sat

Manko of thirty two shapes

Saint like god like Ketriputtur,

Ketrisaral Bandesaral came to the  
mother

In thirty two jets her milk spurted

*par par par*

Spurted into the mouth of Bandesara

And then he sat on her lap

What happened to Bandesara?

The sound of music approached

What form would he take?

In this world what should it be?

MANKO BECAME THE WHISK GANGA

MALLI

AND KETRIPUTTUR KETRISARAL

BANDESARA STOOD UP AS THE BROTHER

SPEAR HEAD

Then with music they came,

But Manko was not to be seen

A WHISK APPEARED

THE BROTHER SPEAR HEAD WAS THERE

Sirivalaval the clan priest lifted

The god on his right shoulder

Placed the god in a pot, then took it  
up,

The wedding rhythm then stilled

Now playing the god's rhythm

All returned to the village

Put down the god beside Gaburaki,

Then all rejoiced

Here and there the spiders thread  
broke

Now came the rain with great force,

Rain came and all were happy,

That year all was well,

Wells filled and tanks filled

Great was the joy

OUR GOD IT IS OUR GOD!

"TUNDI RAKSHASA'S DAUGHTER,

1 From the moment of Manko's and Bandesara's metamorphosis both are referred to collectively as Ratar or Pea

*Nendu tamun nair tadur mire mater.*

*ekus putralir mire mater,*

*parenda jank kuralir mire mater*

*kas sobator Sirivalaval kajoral mire*

*mater,*

*atum kutum ser saga mire masi*

*bahan gaja uaja suja danter*

*Sandan gaska sicut poro dondera*

*mara bud utsi mania*

*Manko batu mayana satu yogi*

*derulumbi Ketriputtur*

*Ketrisaral Bandesaral auua naga sonji*

*mater,*

*maneke batu darana pal parparpar*

*mirania,*

*Bandesarana torqaga aranta*

*aran gatka korate sonp utor*

*Bandesaral udan gatka batal anta?*

*li aja gajate karum uater*

*bata maya anta?*

*Duniyat ropo batal anta?*

*Gangamalli chauwur anta Manko,*

*ata paja Ketriputtur, Ketrisaral*

*Bandesaral biradar sale an nita*

*li aja gajate sonji manter,*

*maneke surteke Manko sile,*

*chauwur duanta,*

*biradar sale mania*

*Sirivalaval kajoral mendol poro*

*tina bujate Ratar uata!*

*inji kuru: taga uarsi tan pitor,*

*puta paja marming dolk band ata*

*ata paja nendu pen dolk paseke*

*nendu nahin nagure uanter*

*uata paja Gaburaki taga inter,*

*irte paja balobal kushi ater,*

*nendu goptera nul benda hake ata*

*baga taga pendu warsan pir jore jore*

*mata*

*pir uata anand ater,*

*syand kalam isokot ata*

*kuhu ninta, tarai ninta,*

*anand ata*

*Mawa pen, pen ata!*

*Tundi rakhasana masar*



"THE DIAMOND GODDESS MANKO,  
 "KETRIPUTTAR KETRISARAL  
 "BANDESARA IS OUR BROTHER SPEAR-  
 HEAD

"LET US WORSHIP THE GOD!"

Brothers seven, the grandsires gathered,  
 Fourteen men, the fathers gathered,  
 One-and-twenty sons assembled,  
 Twelve related kinsmen gathered,  
 Then Sirivalaval, the clan-priest  
 And Hirasuka, they too assembled.

At the god's place, the sacred feast  
 place they put down the god,

Then in procession circled the village,  
 Went to the sacred shelter of branches,  
 Performed there the rites of the house,  
 Sisters five, the wives of the priests'-kin  
 Greeted Raitar the god;

Sister's five, the wives of the chief's kin  
 Greeted Raitar the god;

Sisters five, the wives of clansmen,  
 Greeted Raitar the god;

Sisters five, the Pardhan women  
 Greeted the god.

To the tree-shadowed rest-place they  
 went

In pious gathering, in friendly gather-  
 ing they sat,

Then went to the sixteen springs of the  
 river Narbada.

Bathed there Raitar, the god,  
 And then returned to the village.

Then followed the rite of horned goats,  
 Now see! of goats with silvery fore-  
 heads,

They sacrificed cocks with spurs,  
 And cocks with great combs,  
 Sacrificed cows two years old,  
 Then performed the sacred rites,  
 Completed the rites of Raitar, the god.

There sat in pious gathering and  
 friendly assembly,

At last they untied the god Raitar,  
 And returned to the village,  
 For five and five days, fully ten days  
 they held the god's feast.

From there the Raur folk returned  
 Each man returned to his home.

*Hiradevi Manko,  
 Ketriputtar Ketrisaral  
 Badesaral biradar sale ator,*

*marat penk tunkat!*

*Tamun siwir tadur mire masi,  
 chauda jan babur mire mater,  
 ekwis putralir mire masi,  
 parenda jank kuralir mire mater,  
 Sirivalaval katoral mire mator,  
 Hirasukal mire mator.*

*Pengara warwagaya pen reimar*

*reisi nar tirimar,  
 tirit paja bohurjar mandop ne waimar  
 wata paja rotaman yetmar,  
 serial siyung katorek awena  
 man Raitar yetmar;  
 serial siyung patlek awena  
 Raitar man yetmar;  
 serial siyung kutmek awena  
 Raitar man yetmar;  
 serial siyung Patari wotak awekna  
 man yetmar.*

*Tetsi romi mara baskera sonmar,*

*sonji sota paja ram saba sadur saba  
 udmar,*

*sora darkena Narbad gangate sonji  
 waimar,*

*Raitarun yer mihimar,  
 mihit paja nate waimar.*

*wata paja kohkwatang,  
 nend sura! chandralik bakrana bojun  
 anta,*

*ata paja aralkwatang gogring,  
 tsumaralik gogring puja aimar,  
 sungras padana bojan aimar,  
 ata paja neki badi pura kimar,  
 kita paja Pen Raitar neki badi puri  
 kimar.*

*Kita paja ram saba sadur saba ata,*

*ata paja Pen Raitar kali kimar,  
 kita paja waimar, nate waimar,  
 pachana pach, daha rozkna penk aimar.*

*Bagatur aga Raurk tsentse mater  
 bona ron wor tsentse mater.*

*The Myths of the Seven Panior Brothers*

five-brother clans, as well as of the special role played by *chauwur* and *sale*, that one might expect to find parallel myths current among the seven and four-brother clans. For these phratries too worship their Persa Pen with the symbols of *chauwur* and *sale* and the identity of the ritual leaves little doubt that in all the four phratries the sentiment permeating the cult is essentially the same. Yet most of the myths told by the Pardhans of the seven and four brother clans do not contain any tales comparable to those of Sungalturpo, Manko, Rai Bandar and Bandesara. In explaining the *chauwur* and *sale* the Pardhans of these two phratries either confine themselves to the story common to all four kin groups, the institution of the Persa Pen worship by Pahandi Kupa Lingal, or tell of the acquisition of a *chauwur* and a *sale* by some clan hero, but not always of a metamorphic origin.

Many myths of the seven brother phratry and particularly those told by Pardhans of Mesram clan lay moreover greater emphasis on the cult of Sri Shek, the serpent god, than on that of the Persa Pen, and consistencies resulting from a combin-

Here I will quote first a verbal translation of a hymn that recounts the establishment of the Persa Pen cult by the seven-brother clans after their departure from the ancestral village of Dhanegaon. It is the version recited by Maravi Pardhans of the Mesela khandan, but contains also a short reference to the special cult of the Buigoita Mesram who revere Panior, their legendary ancestor, and the god Sri Shek.

The seven brothers left Dhanegaon and went to Bourmachua with its hamlets of Apachumuri, Tupachikeri, Kalasamuri, Soneri,

so they went to the hill Bashadongar Ardalgurdal Bormal Metta and placed Raitar (obviously the *sale*) in a golden nest. Then the father Jugad Raur, Sondevi, the mother, and the grandfather Son Raur, returned to their own land (*watan*) and there established Raitar (obviously the *chauwur*) in Little Mesela and Great Mesela, the village of Raitar. Fight were the Maravi and after him Korvi Verma, Mesram and last of all they were

"Now let us hold the rites of Raitar, let us bring a *lati* stick." Where did they go? They went to the fiery Jangu Bai. "Give us a

*kati* for Raitar," they said. And to the seven brothers Jangu Bai gave a *kati*. Then with the *kati* they went to Mesala and brought Raitar from Bormal hill in the village Sonetachipotasonpakar. "Now let us hold the rites of Raitar!"

At the time of the feast the seven brothers, the grandfathers gathered; Son Raur performed the rites, Jugad Raur performed the rites, then the seven brothers stood up to worship Raitar. Who came then? Our fourteen families gathered. They sacrificed a chicken, cutting it in two, and the sacrificer was Maravi; one beat a drum (*dol*) and he became Dol Maravai, one held a sword (*kanda*) and he became Kandadar Maravi, one held a torch (*budli*) and he became Budlikar Maravi, one held a spear (*balian*) and he became Balian Maravi. Where did they go then? Kandada Maravi went to Deogarh, Bulaikar Maravi went to Kalkas Balpura.

At Bourmachua lived Panior. The seven grandfathers, the eight brothers assembled; then Panior divided the *sale*. Panior said to Mesram: "You stay here in Bourmachua and perform the sacred rites, in my name you shall perform them; I am the *sale*, I am the god, having joined the ranks of the gods here I will stay.<sup>1</sup> You seven brothers shall stay in Sonetachipotasonpakar. You seven brothers come and stand near me, I have become a god, to the seven kin-groups I am now giving seven *sale*."<sup>2</sup> Having given them the *sale* he entered the world of gods.

Then Son Raur, the Meselkar Maravi, stood up holding the *kati* stave; in Mesela he stood up, in Mesela he erected the *kati*. When he performed the sacred ritual, he called the Pardhan. Holding the fiddle, the Pardhan sat in front, the *katora* Maravi Nagbar crouched to make the offerings; Sudia the Pardhan played the fiddle. After the sacrificial rite they said: "Now let us tie up Raitar." The seven brothers, the grandfathers, went to the Ardal Gurdal Bomral hill and placed Raitar in the golden nest. Then they returned. The seven brothers lived at Sonetachipotasonpakarwajwarbiri, Raitar remained on the Bormal hill. And in all the years after they performed the rites of Raitar and lived on their land."

This song combines two ideas: the belief that at the time of the Gonds' dispersal from Dhanegaon each phratry brought a Persa Pen, a brother *sale*, with them, and the belief that later some of the human ancestors turned into gods and were henceforth worshipped. Here the division of the *sale*, the iron spear-head, as the visible symbol of the Persa Pen into eight pieces explains the existence of a *sale* in each clan; and the deification of Panior refers to the special cult of the Buigota branch of the Mesram clan, of which more will be said presently. The

1. *Nanai sale, nanai pen, devastan asi ige mandanton nana.*

2. There seems to be a certain confusion in regard to the number of brothers; for Taram, the son of Kamkabuda, is considered the youngest and eighth brother of the seven Panior brothers, and for this reason the phratry is sometimes described as Atiyen Saga (eight brother kin-group),

hymn makes no mention of a *chauwur*, a sacred whisk, but the Pardhan explained that his, like the *chauwur* of all Maravi *khandan*, was black and represented Manko. For though the wife of a five brother man and now revered as Persa Pen of the five brothers phratry, Manko sought help from Panior (cf. p. 209) when her husband turned her away and in commemoration of this visit and on account of the black lock she gave as token Panior tied a black *chauwur* in her name, and the seven brother clans revere her now together with Malesing Raitar, their Persa Pen.

try, t  
tions of a glorious past in distant Deogarh far to the north in the Central Provinces where Maravi Rajas were powerful rulers. The history of the Mesram clan, on the other hand and particularly its Buigoita branch, is intimately linked with many localities in the Adilabad hills, and the very great number of Gonds and Pardhans of this clan suggests that here lay an old centre of this clan. I propose therefore to give the lengthy story of the seven Panior brothers as told by a Mesram Pardhan of the Buigoita family.

In Bourmachua<sup>1</sup> lived Jajkial and his wife Worsdevi<sup>2</sup> and his wife Sondevi; gold and silver was theirs but his brothers were still small boys, a great disease ravaged the land, Jajkial and Rukdevi Worsdevi and Sondevi and all the inhabitants of Bourmachua were destroyed, only the seven Panior brothers were spared seven small boys the youngest as yet unable to walk.

How shall we live, they said to each other, "where shall we find food?" So they lamented and cried in the deserted village. At last the eldest brother thought of Sonedhandartri and went in quest of tance.

S

late in the evening they reached seven cattle sheds which belonged to seven Golkur<sup>3</sup> brothers of Sonedhandartri. It was growing dark and they sheltered in one of the cattle sheds. Now near Sonedhandartri lived a tigress who every night broke into one of the cattle sheds and slew the Golkur brothers' bulls and cows. But that night when the tigress came and saw the sleeping Panior children, she stopped and thought "These are the Panior boys from Bourmachua sons of Worsdevi, grandsons of Jajkial—where dwell the children of so great a house I will wreak no harm." And quietly she went away.

<sup>1</sup> Jiden tied with the present Keslapur in Uan Taluq.

<sup>2</sup> In Gond mythology the word *dev* occurs frequently as part of the name of male gods or men.

<sup>3</sup> Golkurs better known as Gollas are herdsmen. Luce Smith describing the castes of the Chanda District writes of them: "The Gollas are a well grown wild looking people who are peculiar about the least cultivated part of the district and live by tending cattle" (Op. cit. p. 52).

Next morning the Golkur brothers were well pleased for their cattle had suffered no harm. They found the boys, and hearing that they were the Panior brothers, they decided to adopt the children, for they themselves were childless; thus each Golkur took one Panior into his house.

For twelve years the boys lived with the Golkur brothers, learning to herd cattle. From time to time the Golkurs gave the boys their maimed cattle, calves with broken legs, blind cows, bulls with sore feet, and the Panior brothers, touching the animals with a rod, made them whole. Thus they started raising a herd and so rapidly did their cattle increase that after twelve years their wealth was as great as that of the Golkurs and among their animals was one very fine bull.

Then the Panior thought of Bourmachua and resolved to return to their own land. With sorrowful hearts the Golkur brothers let them depart. Driving their herds before them, the seven Panior brothers took the road to Bourmachua, passing on the way Indraveli-Injarveli,<sup>1</sup> the seat of a Raja of Tsakati clan. Now the Tsakati Raja was the Panior boys' mother's brother and meeting him in the forest where he was hunting, they reproached him for his neglect at the time of their parents' death. So violent were they that the Raja feared for his life; hastily he returned home and told his daughter of the unpleasant encounter.

But the seven brothers continued on their way to Gaurapura on the land of Bourmachua. There they first built a pen with a wall of stone for their cattle; then they built houses. The elder brothers did the work of house and fields and the youngest grazed the cattle.

The Tsakati Raja's daughter could not rid her mind of the Panior boys who had frightened her father and his huntsmen by their violent reproaches. So secretly one night she left her parents' house and going to Bourmachua entered the house of the Panior brothers. All slept; quietly she did the housework, prepared food and fetched water, but at dawn she stole away. In the morning each brother asked the other who had been up working so early, but all said that they had slept. Each night thereafter the same thing happened and at last the eldest brother decided to keep watch. But as night wore on he dropped off to sleep and next morning the housework had again been completed; so it was on the five following nights when each of the next five brothers tried to keep awake. At last it was the turn of the youngest brother. He cut his finger and into the wound put chillies; all night long the pain kept him awake and he saw the Tsakati-Raja's daughter enter the house. When she had finished the work, he caught her and woke his brothers. Thus cornered the girl declared that she was their mother's brother's daughter, and hearing this the eldest brother decided to marry her.

1, A village on the Utur-Gudi Hatnur road.

For several years she lived happily with the seven Panior brothers. Then one day she told her husband that she would like to visit her parents. Together they set out for Indraveli. In the dense forest she left her husband on the pretext of relieving herself, and turning into a tigress fell upon him and killed him. After a few days the Tsakati Raja's daughter went again to Bourmachua and told the six younger brothers that her husband was staying on with his parents in law. But when the days passed and he failed to return, the next eldest brother insisted on going to fetch him, bidding his sister in law go with him to Indraveli.

She killed her brother

Panior brother

all his cattle which he must needs leave without a herdsman, to the bull Borum Deo.<sup>1</sup> On the way the woman turned again into a tigress but seeing her coming the Panior boy invoked all his gods and his ancestors, praying: "In the heavens moon and sun, in the earth Raja Shek,<sup>2</sup> Gurdal Malesingh, Rukdevi Sondevi, Jykhial and Worsdevi save me!" Oh Raja Shek, lord of the earth, give me a place in your realm! He had hardly spoken when the ground opened and he disappeared into the land of Shek, over him the ground closed in before the tigress came to him.

tree

branch

grew a mango-

formed on the

Now in one of the mangoes was Panior's life<sup>3</sup> and knowing this the tigress watched the fruit day and night, but a crow came and carried off the mango in which was Panior's life. It flew away and passing over a tank belonging to the Raja Soyam Surwesi the crow dropped the fruit into the water, where it was swallowed by a *bodi* fish.

At that time Doh-dam, a Panior girl, was in the forest for several weeks she had not seen her husband. She was very sad and could not be lucky. Soon she went home. On the way a voice spoke from the forest: "Panior, I am Panior, open the fish."

The Raja Soyam Surwesi and when she heard of the boy who brought good fortune she knew at once that he must be Panior. Again she plotted to kill him. She complained to her husband of sore eyes, saying she needed tiger's milk to cure them. When no one volunteered to

<sup>1</sup> Borum means bull of the song about Panior's bull on pp. 429-433.

<sup>2</sup> Akastape Chandasuriya, means literally in the heavens moon and sun, while Latastape means in the earth.

<sup>3</sup> Hence forth the youngest Panior brother is simply referred to as Panior.

procure the milk, she persuaded the Raja to send Panior on the dangerous errand. But Panior brought the tiger's milk and later when she demanded bear's milk he succeeded in bringing the bear's milk. At last fearing the Rani would sooner or later find a way of killing him, Panior told the Raja of her former misdeeds. Greatly shocked, the Raja summoned a *panchayat* and the Rani was banished from his village. Weeping she returned to Indraveli, her home-village, but she dared not appear before her parents; instead she turned into a *sakto*, a stone still revered by the Gonds of the vicinity.

Panior, however, went to Bourmaehua. There he found his cattle unharmed, still guarded by Borum Deo, the divine bull. Then he married the two daughters of the Atram Raja of Sitagondi, Machalturpo and Machalindur, and after a little while he took the Raur daughter Kamkabuda of Gudmasur Patera as his third wife.

Panior's bull Borum roamed the countryside, doing great harm to crops and fields. One day the bull went to Utnur and broke into a Koli's garden, but the Koli following his track to Chapapur near Shampur, shot him dead. As the Koli cut up the carcass, first severing a leg, it turned into stone. Just then Panior passed by and seeing his bull dead grieved greatly; he brought five goats and sacrificed them to appease the offended god. This is why up to this day Gonds give offerings to the petrified bull at Shampur.

So Panior lived with the three wives in Bourmaehua; but for twelve years he performed no rites in honour of the gods, nor did he celebrate any feast. Then one day Kamkabuda said to the two elder wives: "In my father's village the gods' rites were held in Bhawe and at the time of Divali the men danced with Akara drums, but here people hold no feasts! They do not even perform the first fruit rites. In my father's village the *katora* and the Pardhan were called to arrange for the worship of gods, but Panior, so great and so rich a man, does nothing." But the two other women quietened her saying: "What does that matter? Are we not rich and prosperous? What else do we need?"

One night, however, when Panior had gone to bed and his wives believed him sleeping, they talked again amongst themselves, and the youngest again began complaining: "For twelve years we have lived here, yet no relative or kinsman has come to our husband's house, no brother, no brother's son and no sister's husband has ever come to see him. Can it be that he has no father and no grandfather? Bulls are his uncles and buffaloes his brothers!"

Panior hearing this was greatly distressed, and he went to his court-house. "Where is my Pardhan?" he thought, "Where are my kinsmen? What profits me all my wealth if even my own wives speak like this?"

When his wives saw how worried he was, they were sorry for

their foolish words and Kamkabuda sent a message to Gudmasur Patera, asking her brothers to come to Bourmachua because she had quarrelled with her husband. Two of her brothers set out at once, and as they approached Bourmachua, Panior saw them, and he said to himself 'Not only does my wife blame me for having no relations, but now she has called her brothers to take her away.'

So when his brothers-in-law entered the court house, he turned away and did not return their greeting. In vain they saluted him and tried to catch his eye. At last they said "If you have quarrelled with your wife, it is not our fault, but don't grieve over what she has said. Take our advice, and all will be well and you will find your kinsmen." These words greatly cheered Panior. His brothers-in-law instructed him to load all his guns and big cannons, and then to sacrifice goats before them. Thus done, they waited for dawn and with the first glimmer of light, fired off every gun and cannon in Bourmachua.

In distant Wairagarb<sup>1</sup> the House Pardhan of the seven brother folk heard the noise and waking said to his wife "What noise from the directions of Bourmachua? Can war have broken out? Is some raja besieging the town?"

"For fully twelve years you have not been to see Panior, you know nothing of what may have happened in Bourmachua. You had better go and see."

So the Pardhan took his fiddle *Hirabai* and his spear and made the round of all his patrons. First he went to the Maravi brothers then to the Marakola brother, then to the Korveta brother, then to the Purka brother, then to the Verma brother and last of all to the Pandera and Mesram brothers. To all he said "For many years you have not visited Panior, for twelve years you have not seen his face. Now a great noise has come from Bourmachua, it may be that he is in trouble! Let us all hurry to Bourmachua!"

Then all the brothers summoned their followers, harnessed horses and elephants packed up their tents, and set out for Bourmachua. Outside the village they pitched their camp and alone the Pardhan entered the house of Panior and made his ceremonial greeting. Then Panior's wives knew that their house Pardhan had arrived, and after giving him food, they sent him to the court house. There he found Panior, and told him that all his father's brother's sons had arrived.

Together Panior and the Pardhan went to the mango-grove where  
 he & his men  
 a . . . . . s greeting they  
 t . . . . . ler of his guns  
 f . . . . . But Panior re-  
 his wives had

<sup>1</sup> Wasagarb was the seat of a Gond dynasty in the Central Provinces



chided him that he had no father and no brothers and no kinsmen.

Then Panior sent the Pardhan to fetch his wives; the three came dressed in their best clothes and laden with precious jewels, and Panior bade them greet his kinsmen in ceremonial fashion. So his uncles and father's brother's sons, and all his kinsmen stood up in lines three and four fields long, and his wives had to make obeisance to each, before each they had to kneel and touch his feet with the forehead. Soon their knees, heads and elbows were sore: they grew dizzy with so much bending and stooping, but when the Pardhan would have led them away, Panior ordered them to go on, saying: "You have said that only bulls, buffaloes and goats are my brothers and kinsmen; now you shall greet every single one of them in the proper way!" The women were sorely tried, and at last his relations begged Panior to forgive them, and he allowed them to be led back to the village.

Then his kinsmen said: "If you do not need us, we will return to our villages."

"No," replied Panior, "first let us worship our god."

"We have come for war, not for the worship of gods. We have brought guns not offerings with us."

"Is there not plenty of everything in my house? Take whatever you need."

Then they took chickens, goats and calves, vermilion, turmeric and incense, and set out for the sea. Five days they journeyed before they reached the shore and saw beyond the great water the sacred golden shrine where their god dwelt. Early next morning Panior and his brothers bathed, and then he asked Maravi, the eldest brother, to cross the sea and fetch the god, promising villages and riches as a reward; but Maravi refused and after him all the other brothers likewise refused. At last Panior declared that he himself would bring the god and told his brothers to play drums and the Pardhans to play trumpets while they awaited his return.

Panior entered the water; at first it reached to his ankles, then to his knees and at last to his chin. Then all his kinsmen lamented, for fear their brother would drown; but Panior cut some lotus leaves and floating on them swam across the sea.

At last he came to the golden shrine and stepping ashore tied a cloth round his neck. He found the great house of Raja Shek,<sup>1</sup> but the god himself was absent, he had gone to the land of precious jewels to eat pearls and gold. Budiya, the guardian of the temple, asked Panior who he was: "I am Panior of Bourmachua! Though your god is not here, let me look inside the shrine!" At first Budiya refused, but at last Panior persuaded him to open the door so that he might peep in with one eye. Inside Panior saw the god's throne

1. In this version the serpent-god Shek, who in another myth is described as carrying the earth on his head, is referred to alternatively as Raja Shek and Sri Shek, the story-teller varying the name at his discretion.

surrounded with golden threads strung with *pan* leaves. Then he opened the door a little further so as to see with both eyes then flung it wide open and sat on the threshold. Suddenly he jumped up and in one leap seated himself on the god's throne.

No, no! cried Budiya, "Don't do that! Get out, get out Panior! If Shek finds you here, he will kill me,—off with you!"

But Panior was deaf to his protests and invoked Raja Shek and all the gods, he called on his *soria*<sup>1</sup> the five brother folk, the six brother folk, and the four brother folk. Then he plucked one of the god's *pan* leaves from the golden thread and put it into his mouth, six more he took for his brothers. Then he saluted the angry Budiya and returned across the sea the way he had come.

There was great rejoicing among his kinsmen when Panior stepped ashore, but he had to confess he had not found the god, only seen his temple, as a proof he gave to each brother one of the *pan* leaves. Then all said "What use are all these animals for sacrifice when there is no god? We will return home." And with these words they scattered food offerings into the sea and returned to their own villages. But Panior went to Bourmachua and resolved to spend the contents of his treasure house on alms to all who came to his door.

Now when Raja Shek returned to his temple he smelt the smell of man. And he abused Budiya who at last admitted that Panior had been the intruder. "So much wealth have I heaped on the man," said Raja Shek in great wrath, "and now he comes and defiles my shrine. This shall be his end, I will go and destroy him."

So Raja Shek, in the shape of an enormous cobra, swam through the sea and went towards Bourmachua. First he passed Chandapur<sup>2</sup> and Bhandak<sup>3</sup> and came then to Dewara<sup>4</sup> where hills barred his way west and south. So he battered against them and broke a way through<sup>5</sup>. Then he went through Jangaon<sup>6</sup> and down the Moar valley, climbed up to Sitagondi, the seat of the Atram Rajas, and passing Polesar, Burnur, Koinur and Harapnir came to Kanchanpalli<sup>7</sup>. From there he slid down the steep slopes to Kavala. Great was the heat of the day, and he went to the Godavari to bathe. Near the village of Astanunargu he swam in the river. Then he turned northwards. By way of Kalera, Udampur,<sup>8</sup> Birsaiptet, Utnur, Shampur, Indraveli and Arkapur<sup>9</sup> he reached at last Bourmachua, at the

1. Cf. p. 45.

2. The present Chanda.

3. A historical town on the Wardha River in Chanda District.

4. A village in Rajara Taluq.

5. This refers to a narrow pass now traversed by the motor road between Aulabad and Najura.

6. The present Aulabad.

7. All villages in Utnur Taluq.

8. Kalera and Udampur are villages in Lakshetpet Taluq in the Godavari valley.

9. Birsaiptet Utnur, Shampur, Indraveli and Arkapur are in Utnur Taluq.

village-boundary he halted. Ready to devour all the people of Bourmachua he opened his mouth; so wide did he open it that his lower jaw rested on the earth while the upper jaw touched the sky and shut out the sun.

Just then Chiringibhat, a chief of mendicants, was on his way to Bourmachua, for the news of Panior's generosity had spread far and wide. When he saw Sri Shek with gaping jaws he put grass in his own mouth, tied a cloth round his neck and approached Sri Shek with folded hands, begging him to spare Bourmachua and its people.<sup>1</sup> Seven lines Chiringibhat drew across the path with his staff, saying: "If you dare to cross these lines, you will be cut in small pices; but if you stay where you are, I will call Panior and he will come with all his people to worship you."

To this Sri Shek agreed. So Chiringibhat went to the court-house where Panior was sitting with high officers, jagirdars, and jama-dars. Chiringibhat greeted him respectfully and said: "I came to Bourmachua to ask for a gift, but Sri Shek stands at the boundary and shuts out the sun, ready to devour you all. However, do not fear. I will show you a way of appeasing the god: take seven loads of milk, seven loads of curd, seven loads of sugar, and seven loads of eggs, all these carry to the village-boundary.

The people of Bourmachua followed this advice and Chiringibhat told them to pour all the food into Sri Shek's huge mouth. "I have eaten pearls and gold, but never have I tasted things as sweet as this," thought Sri Shek; he was greatly pleased and at last shut his mouth and in a friendlier mood asked Panior why he had come to the golden shrine beyond the sea. Then Panior explained, he had gone with no evil thought, but only to summon Sri Shek, so that he and his kinsmen might worship their god.

"Do not come to my shrine beyond the sea. Bourmachua shall be your place of worship. Here shall be your sixteen *sati* and eighteen *kamk*,"<sup>2</sup> from Astanmargu you shall fetch water, and at Bourmachua you shall worship me. Here once every twelve months, all relatives and kinsmen shall gather and perform the sacred rites."

Then Sri Shek entered the village and going through all the streets, pointed out each place where his rites should be held. On leaving Bourmachua he took the big Maisama of stone from the entrance and carried it away with him. Then he turned east and passing the villages of Jamgaon, Usegaon, Polesar and Sitakara,<sup>3</sup> went to Sitagondi to see his maternal kinsmen. Reaching Sitagondi he thought: "What is the use of carrying this Maisama so far? I will

1. To approach a person with grass in one's mouth is in India a well known way of expressing humility; the supplicant indicates thereby that he is no better than cattle. Gonds always wrap a cloth round the head when worshipping the gods.

2. *Sati* are symbols of female ancestors, *kamk* the symbols of great male ancestors.

3. All villages in Utnur Taluq.

die, their death will always be on my conscience; and he spat out the water. Once more there was water in the tank, but instead of being clear, it was white, having mixed with the milk in Sri Shek's stomach, and to this day the water in the tank of Bhandak is white like milk. At last Sri Shek reached the sea and returned to his golden shrine.

But Panior remained in Bourmachua and after twelve months, at the time of the Pus full moon, he went to Astanmargu on the Godavari, made offerings in remembrance of Sri Shek's bath, took Godavari water and carried it to Bourmachua. At the new moon he performed the sacrificial rites for Sri Shek on the bare ground, and close by on a small hillock he built a shrine for the *sati* and worshipped there too. And thus it has been done, generation after generation.

In this version of the Panior myth as told by Pardhans of the Bugoita *khanda*n of the Mesram clan no mention is made of the cult of the Persa Pen symbol and . . .

... *khanda*n of the Bugoita sub-clan say indeed that they do not worship any Persa Pen like other Gonds, but that their great god is Sri Shek.

The Nagabini<sup>2</sup> branch of the Mesram clan on the other hand observes the worship of Persa Pen like any other Gond clan, and the Nagabini *khanda*n . . .

the danger of entering the water, but Mesram the youngest dived into the sea and the water-spirit Sati Asria took him to a golden shrine guarded by Budiya. This was the house of Bornagbojun (Sri Shek) but the . . .

2. The name Nagabini is perhaps connected with the place Nagbir in Chanda District. Gonds and Pardhans of the Nagabini *khanda*n say indeed that the main cult centre of their *Khanda*n lies north of the Penganga.

*chauwar* and a *sale*. Both these he stole and returned with them to his brothers. When he reached the shore, the seven brothers prepared a great sacrificial feast in honour of Kati Kolasur Jeitur, represented by the white *chauwur*, and Gurda Malesing Raitar, represented by the *sale*. But they could not decide who should officiate at the rites and they prayed to Mahadeo: "Now we have a god, but we have no priest to conduct the worship." Then Mahadeo sent them Laudaskura to act as *katora* and be the guardian of *chauwur* and *sale*.

When they returned to Bourmachua they cleared a sacred place (*pen-gara warawar-gara*), installed there *chauwur* and *sale*, and began to celebrate a feast. But when Bornagbojun returned home and heard that a Panior brother had stolen the sacred objects, he went in great wrath to Bourmachua. There the Panior brothers were celebrating the Persa Pen feast with drums and dancing and did not hear his approach. But Chiringibhat stopped him on the village-boundary, promising to deliver the entire seven-brother folk to his vengeance if he went no further. Then in haste Chiringibhat went to Bourmachua and warned the Panior brothers of the danger and instructed them to deceive Sri Shek by pouring eggs, sugar and milk into his open mouth. And as Bornagbojun's upper jaw was high up in the sky, he saw not what was poured into his mouth. "Is this all?" he asked at last.—"Yes," answered Chiringibhat, "only girls are left, but no seed of the seven-brother folk remains."

Then Bornagbojun closed his jaws and crushing sugar and eggs tasted their sweetness, and said: "Those who robbed me of my property, I have eaten them!" and he was glad. But he did not return to the sea, instead he went to Nagabiri<sup>1</sup> and there made his home. Later Taram, the eighth of the Panior brothers, sometimes also referred to as the nephew, was born, and after establishing the Persa Pen at Bourmachua he went to Nagabiri to perform the rites for Sri Shek; but the seven elder brothers remained in Bourmachua.

### *Kati Kolasur Jeitur and the Myths of the Four Brother Folk*

Of all the deities revered as Persa Pen the clan-gods of the four brother phratry take least shape in the mythology of the Adilabad Gonds. While on my very first tour through the highlands of Adilabad I heard of Sungalturpo and Rai Bandar, it was not until four years later—at a time when the first chapters of this book had already gone to press—that for the first time I was told a myth relating to the deities worshipped by the four brother clans which was fully consistent with the myths of the other clan-deities. According to all the information previously collected—and whenever I talked to a Gond or Pardhan of a four-brother clan I asked about his clan-god—it seemed that the clans of the Nalwen Saga worshipped a single deity known as Kati Kolasur Jeitur

1. This is probably the present Nagbir between Chanda and Gondia.

and represented by a white *chauwur*. This god was described by some as one of the original *biradar sale* obtained by the Gonds during their stay in Dhanegaon, and subsequently taken to Ramtek Bamni, but the overwhelming majority of Gonds professed complete ignorance as to the origin and nature of Kati Kolasur Jeitur. Yet not only four brother clans, but also certain six brother and seven brother clans worship Kati Kolasur Jeitur, and we have just seen that in a myth of Mesram clan Kati Kolasur Jeitur, symbolized by a white *chauwur*, is established at Bourmachua. The association of Kati Kolasur Jeitur with a white *chauwur* is indeed almost the only point on which there is general agreement. *Kati* means in Gond ordinarily the sacred bamboo stove to which the *chauwur* is tied during the Persa Pen feasts, and the term Jeitur is sometimes loosely used as a generic term for any Persa Pen. But I have never found a Gond who would definitely assert that the first part of the deity's name referred to a *kati*, and no one was able to explain the word Kolasur.

The following short myth which I discovered only recently at the end of a long quest, is not at all well known, and the teller, Kotnaka Jangu, a Gond of a six brother clan, could recall it only in broad outline. But being consistent with the well documented myths of Sungalturpo and Manko it bears the stamp of authenticity.

According to this myth Kati Kolasur Jeitur is not the name of a single deity, but of a divine pair, Jeitur the mother and Kati Kolasur the son. Jeitur was the daughter of Mahabag Wika and Rai Vagi. Though both her parents were tigers, she had the likeness of a woman and her name was Jeitur. She married Bomredeal, one of the sons of Mahabag Wika, who lived in the forest. There arose a quarrel between Bomredeal and his three brothers,<sup>1</sup> and as a result of this quarrel Jeitur and her son were driven from Ramtek Bamni.

They went to the valley Bupat Kurwa Gond, and there in the deep forest they remained for many years. When Kati Kolasur grew

In a dream his father Bomredeal learnt that his own son was the cause of these misfortunes. He went out to find him, but his search was in vain. Then one day the cattle boys followed their herd into the valley Bupat Kuruwa Gond, and there they saw Jeitur and her son.

When they brought home the news to Ramtek Bamni, Bomredeal and all his people went out with drums and trumpets to conduct Jeitur

<sup>1</sup> The informant did not know the nature and cause of this quarrel, but it may be that Bomredeal suspected his wife of misbehaviour with his brothers just as Duadna Raur suspected Manko's faithfulness.

and Kati Kolasur home.

But as the procession reached the valley, Jeitur turned herself into a white *chauwur* and Kati Kolasur was transformed into a *sale*. These were brought to Ramtek Bamni and were henceforth worshipped as the Persa Pen of the four-brother folk. Waresomal became the guardian (*patla*) of the Persa Pen, and another of the four brothers assumed the office of *katora*.

Another myth relating to the deities worshipped by the four-brother folk at their original home Ramtek Bamni, which I was told by Pusam Bhimu, a Pardhan of Gunjala village, gives an alternative explanation of the origin of Kati Kolasur Jeitur.

This myth tells how the four brothers Jangudev, Bomredev, Koderau and Kodebhira leave Dhanegaon and settle at Ramtek Bamni, where shortly afterwards they marry four daughters of Patal Raja Shek. The next part of the story refers to the one-hundred and five clans of the four-brother folk and to Kodesungal, the *katora*. It also refers to seven store-houses in the hill-settlement of Maldongargaon above Ramtek Bamni and the fact is mentioned that twelve years pass without any rites being performed in Maldongurgaon.

Jangudev rules over Ramtek Bamni, and the myth relates how after twelve years he decides to perform the sacred rites in honour of his gods. Then follows a description of the rites, at which Kodesungal acts as priest and in this four *kati*, instead of the usual one, are mentioned, though there is only one *sale*. But the name of the deity or deities revered under these symbols remains undisclosed, and Pusan Bhimu the teller of the story could not say more than that the rites were performed in honour of the Persa Pen. Five days after the feast Kodesungal dies, leaving a widow, Sungalsiro, and two sons, Persor Poti and Chudur Poti. With the priest dead and his sons small boys, Jangudev abandons all religious rites and his mind is set only on the increase of his wealth. Another twelve years pass and neither the first fruit rites nor the clan feast in the month of Bhawe are observed. Then one day four gods riding on white horses with yellow saddles come from the hill Maldongargaon to Ramtek Bamni, and to all those whom they meet they say: "Go and tell Jangudev and Bomredev, the riders of the four white horses bid you Ram, Ram."

Jangudev is told of the riders and their message, but he fails to understand its import. Six months pass and the cult of the gods is still neglected. The gods then take council. "It is no use, brothers," they say to each other, "he does not remember us." So they transform themselves into four tigers and prey on the cattle of Ramtek Bamni. But even the complaints of the herdsmen and the destruction of his herds bring about no change of heart in Jangudev.

This episode has a close parallel in a myth of the five-brothers phratry (cf. p. 299), but while there it is Manko and Bandesara who

bring misfortune on the house of the obdurate Dundri Raur, and only Bandesara turns into a tiger, the Pusam Pardhan's story tells of four gods who avenge the neglect of their cult by destroying Jangudev's wealth.

In the course of twelve years Jangudev and his people lose all their cattle through the ravages of the four tigers, but still they fail to propitiate the gods. At last the gods appear to Jangudev in a dream and reproach him for abandoning their cult.

'At last will you remember us'

We live in the shrine on the hill Maldongargaon

But our dwelling lies in ruins,

No longer do you tend us. What has made you so proud?

Herds of cattle we gave you, wealth we gave you

Through us you received your domain,

Through us are you lord of the throne

Leaving Jangudev the four gods go to the Pardhan Hirasuka and address him in a similar way. The next day the Pardhan visits his patron and tells him of his dream. Then Jangudev realizes that the four men who appeared to him that night must have been gods and gives orders to celebrate the sacred rites.

In the description of this feast we hear again of four *katt*, but there is no mention of four *sale* or four *chauwur*, and the deity is referred to in the singular. The rites conform closely to those of a Persa Pen feast in the month of Bhawe. But there is no *kato a*, and when the two young sons of Kodesungal try to take their part in the sacrificial rites, they are beaten and driven away. Crying they go to their mother, but she comforts them with the assurance that the gods will ultimately become theirs.

While throughout the earlier part of the myth, emphasis is laid on the fact that there are four gods—four riders, four tigers, four men appearing in Jangudev's dream—from this point on the story teller speaks of the deity of the four brother folk as of a single 'god,' just as the Pardhans of any other phratry speak of their Persa Pen. Yet the 'four gods' appear once more to intervene in events that occur later in the myth.

The two sons of the late *katora* secretly remove the sacred symbols of the god and the *sati* stones, and accompanied by their mother Sungal saro, leave Ramtek Bamni. Carrying their god they wander for twelve years, and at last they come to a stony place near water. There they rest and when after they are refreshed they try to take up the sacred symbols, they find they cannot move them and realize that the god himself has chosen the place as his seat. They cut posts and build two shrines, one for the symbols of the god and one for the *sati*, and hide the 'god' (obviously the *sale*) in the branches of a tree. They have no food but honey and jungle fruit, and so they live for six months.



Then come the rains and when the new moon of Pola appears the boys are sad. For this is the time for the *Novon*, the first fruit rite, and they have no *sama*<sup>1</sup> to offer at their shrines.

But the four brothers, the gods, transform themselves into Gaure, and become Aha Gaure, Maha Gaure, Dhurma Gaure and Reka Gaure. Reka Gaure makes a square clearing in the forest<sup>2</sup> and soon *sama* grows and ripens, and the Gaure pluck some *sama* ears and heap them on a stony place. When Sungalsiro goes for water she sees the heap of *sama*. She tells her sons, and they come to the conclusion that not men but gods have deposited the *sama* there so conveniently for their first fruit rite. They bring in the *sama* and Sungalsiro prepares a place for the offerings with sambar-dung. There they leave the ears for a whole night and next morning they thresh them. Now they have *sama* but no liquor to offer the gods. So they decide to sell some *sama* and take two measures to the liquor-shop at Pourgarh. The shop-keeper, a Kalal, asks them what they will pay for the liquor, and they give him the *sama*. As they fill their gourd-bottle with liquor, Reka Gaure comes into the shop for a drink. He sees the *sama* and thinks it has been stolen from his field. The boys protest their innocence, but in vain and Reka Gaure takes them before the Raja of Pourgarh, Konda Kar Bhandev Raja. The Raja asks the boys who they are and they tell him that they are from Ramtek Bamni, that they are the *katora*'s sons living now in exile. Hearing this the Raja dismisses Reka Gaure and reveals to the boys that he is their maternal uncle. He asks them where they live and goes with them to their forest house there they perform the rites in honour of their god and their *sati*. He then invites the boys to come and live with him in Pourgarh. With great pomp and ceremony their god is taken to a new shrine in Pourgarh. After some time the Raja gives his daughters Durkaldevi and Malialdevi in marriage to the *katora* boys. A double wedding is celebrated and Persor Poti marries Durkaldevi and Chudur Poti Malialdevi.

Twelve years pass. In Ramtek Bamni none will give his daughters to the sons of Jangudev. For he has no gods, he has no priest, and he has no religion. At last he calls Hirasuka, the Pardhan, and orders him to find the two *katora* boys who took away the god.

The Pardhan roams the four quarters of the earth without finding a trace of the boys. At last, after twelve years' wandering, he hears from Panior that they are at Pourgarh and goes to the court of Konda-kar Bhandev Raja. He tries to persuade Persor and Chudur Poti to return with him to Ramtek Bamni, but they make the condition that Jangudev himself shall come to fetch them and their god. Hirasuka

1. *Panicum miliare*.

2. The word used for this clearing is *marma*, which means a field where the forest has been cut and fired and the grain is sown in the ashes in the manner still mimicked by Gonds on the night of the Chenchi Bhimana rites (cf. p. 320).



the belief that Kati Kolasur and Jeitur are the names of a divine pair is by no means general, and one can safely say that the majority of the Gonds and Pardhans of Adilabad are ignorant of these myths and think of Kati Kolasur Jeitur as one single deity. Indeed a Pardhan of Geraam clan went so far as to say that Kati Kolasur Jeitur was a son of Sungalturpo, born after Rai Bandar. This statement is indicative of the confusion which reigns in Gond and Pardhan minds in regard to the Persa Pen of the four-brother folk.

Another proof of this confusion is a lengthy myth, told by a Pardhan of a seven-brother clan, in which Kati Kolasur Jeitur appears as a woman:

Kati Kolasur Jeitur was the wife of Pandera, a son of Panior; one day she was washing clothes on a rock in the Godavari when she bore a son, Nagendra, who was a snake and immediately began playing in the water. Suddenly the river began to rise and just then a white god's cow (*pen-mura*) crossed the river and trod on Nagendra's head; in a rage he tore off the cow's white tail. Higher rose the water and surrounded the rock, and Kati Kolasur Jeitur seeing that she would drown said to her son: "My end is near, keep this white *chauwur* as my symbol." Then she was swept off the rock by the current and died. Nagendra too was carried away, but being a snake he did not drown. At Gurico three men of the seven-brother folk visiting Padmalpuri came to the river to fetch water, and, as they dipped their pots into the water, Nagendra slipped into one. A man of Verma clan carried the pot to Gurico and there Nagendra slid out and said to the startled man: "Do not be afraid! Take this white *chauwur*, and keep it in the name of my mother, Kati Kolasur Jeitur, who died in the river flood." Then Nagendra went away to the forest.

But Padmalpuri gave to the Verma man an estate at Gangapur near Tandur, and there he took the *chauwur*. He built a shrine, and for many generations the *chauwur* was guarded by the Verma Deshmukhs of Gangapur, but when at last their estate was acquired by a Brahmin, they left the place.

This myth is contradictory to all other views on Kati Kolasur Jeitur, and is not at all widely known. Yet it cannot be dismissed as the irrelevant phantasy of an individual over-imaginative Pardhan. For it refers to a particular *chauwur* which has been worshipped for many generations in a definite locality and is still in existence, and it is incidentally the only myth about Kati Kolasur Jeitur which explains the invariable association with a white *chauwur*. Just as some seven-brother clans took over the worship of Manko and have black *chauwur*, so many others have taken over the worship of Kati Kolasur Jeitur and a white *chauwur* without, as it would seem, fully understanding the

nature of this god. The tale of Kati Kolasur Jeitur as a woman and daughter-in-law of Panior and her snake-son is obviously influenced by the serpent-worship of the seven-brother phratry. It may have developed as an explanatory myth to account for the combination of the worship of a serpent-god and the cult of a Persa Pen represented by a *chauwur* among the clans of the seven-brother folk.

It is certainly strange that in Adilabad no myth about Kati Kolasur Jeitur is known to and accepted as authentic by a majority of Gonds and Pardhans of the four-brother phratry. But we have already seen that Gond tradition as expressed in such mythological incidents as the crossing of the river, assigns to this phratry a position somewhat separate from the other phratries, and we will see in a later chapter that the clans of the four brother folk have very likely a historical background of their own. Hence perhaps the difficulty of co-ordinating Kati Kolasur Jeitur with other deities revered as Persa Pen.

The four unnamed gods who claim to be worshipped by Jangudev and his four-brother folk have no exact counterpart in the myths of the other phratries. Their cult occupies the place of the Persa Pen cult, and the narrator vacillates between the singular and the plural when referring to the deity or deities revered by the *lators* Kodesungal and his sons Persor Poti and Chudur Poti. But whenever these deities manifest themselves by appearing in the shape of men or tigers they are four, and in this one instance one may therefore be justified in speaking of a "four-god phratry." Whether the four-gods are in the minds of Gonds and Pardhans identical with the four brothers who were the last to emerge from the primeval cave remains a moot point. The myth told by Pusam Bhima contains the following obscure passage:

At Maldongargaon on the hill,

There shall be seven store-houses,

Satwen, Sungraswen, Patwen, Dhurkarwen, Kati Kolasur  
Jeitur,

On the hill of Maldongargaon no rites for the gods were  
performed

Have the names in the third line anything to do with the names of the seven store-houses and if so should Kati Kolasur Jeitur be understood as three names, thus making full the number seven? Pusam Bhima explained that Satwen, Sungraswen, Patwen and Dhurkarwen were the original four *wen* who came out of the primeval cave and it is possibly these mythological figures and ancestors of the four-brother folk who appear later as the "four gods." If this assumption is correct, Maldongargaon, a village on a hill, might be considered an ancient centre of the four-brother folk lived before founding Ram-  
one could well imagine that such  
le place for the worship of the

ancestors who lived and died there. But this does not tally with the idea of Kati Kolasur Jeitur as the Persa Pen of the four-brother clans, and I can see no other explanation for these discrepancies than that the beliefs and traditions of the four-brother phratry in their present form are a conglomeration of several distinct mythological cycles which have never been fully harmonized.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CULT OF THE CLAN-DEITIES

THE myths recounting the origin of the clan-deities and the deeds of divine ancestors form part of an elaborate cult which is one of the most vital elements of Gond culture. In this cult the myths

or the other occasion are many, it is mainly the cult of the clan-deities,

in present-  
extremely  
problematic and here we will confine ourselves mainly to a description of the observable ritual and beliefs.

According to accepted Gond doctrine the culture-hero Pahandi Kupaṛ Lingal instructed the ancestors of the tribe in the cult of deities to be worshipped by each of the four phratrics (*saga*). One myth relates that the four sons of the god Persa Pen, the *biradar sale*, yielded to the persuasions of the Gonds to become their gods, while other myths speak of Pahandi Kupaṛ Lingal procuring for the four original phratrics four iron spear-heads (*sale*), four whisks (*chauwur*), four sets of brass bells (*gagra*), four bamboo staves (*kata*) and four cloths (*karua*), the symbols used in the cult of Persa Pen, the 'great god.'

The original four phratrics (*saga*) are believed to have later split into clans (*para*) and then into sub-clans (*khandan*), and the Gonds explain that in the course of time each of the clans obtained a set of ritual objects and began to worship the Persa Pen of their phratry at separate sanctuaries.<sup>1</sup> Thus it came about that shrines of clan-deities arose in many places and that there is now no clan (or sub-clan) which

1 It is a moot point whether the *chauwur* and *sale* can individually be regarded as idols, or whether it would be safer to consider them only symbols, there can be no doubt, however, that the figure constructed of all the sacred objects and treated in many respects like a human being throughout the Persa Pen rites can best be described as an idol in the same sense in which statues of Hindu deities with human or animal semblance are considered idols.

2 A Pandhan of Kanaka clan in explaining this development said that in the time of the mythical ancestor Dumdina Raur all five-brother people celebrated the Persa Pen feast together but since the menstrual periods of so many women necessitated constant interruptions and postponements of the annual ceremonial, the men decided that they would perform the ceremonies separately whenever their family should be free from menstrual impurity, they made separate Persa Pen, and so the different clans came into being.

does not pride itself on the possession of its own Persa Pen symbols.

Although on reflection all Gonds agree that the Persa Pen of the numerous clans within each phratry are in reality one and the same, they speak of them loosely as of so many separate deities, referring to each Persa Pen by the name of the clan or the locality of his sanctuary. Thus a man will speak of a Mesram or Kanaka Persa Pen, or more particularly of the Sitagondi Persa Pen, whose seat is on a hill near the village of Sitagondi. There are those Persa Pen who as long as human memory reaches have been located in the old homeland or *watan* of their clan, and others which in recent generations have been moved in quick succession from one village to the other. Yet whether stationary or movable, most clan-deities are known by the locality which tradition associates with their origin and to the name of this place is added the suffix *kar*.<sup>1</sup> The most ancient among the Persa Pen of the Atram clan is called Sitagondikar, and one worshipped by the Gond Raja of Chanda and his family is known as Chandakar, though now situated not in Chanda but in a village of Adilabad District. There are exceptions to this rule however; some Persa Pen take their name from events or objects concerned with their origin: Korkar, the god of another Atram sub-clan, takes its name from the horn (*kor*) of a buffalo killed by a legendary ancestor.

Before entering into details of the complicated system of clans and sub-clans and their corresponding cult-centres, let us consider the essential features common to all Persa Pen irrespective of clan and phratry, the material setting and the ritual observances of the cult.

Though it is more than probable that in the old days, the sacred objects whose prototypes were given to the four phratrics by Pahandi Kupaṅg Lingal were kept in the midst of the forest, far from human habitation and the round of daily life, such seclusion is no longer practicable, and to-day the ritual objects are generally housed at no great distance from the village. If the Persa Pen is still located on the traditional clan-land, you will find the shrine attached to the settlement where the priest (*kaṭora*) and the guardian of the god reside. The shrine may lie in a field or in the nearby jungle and in many cases the tombs<sup>2</sup> of prominent clan-members are to be found in the vicinity. This shrine is of a traditional pattern which does not allow of much variation. It is a small oblong shed with a thatched roof, too low for a man to enter upright, the ridge-pole supported at either end by two stout posts, and the eaves by six or eight posts; in some of the older shrines the floor is built up of stone slabs, but in others it is a low earth dais, the surface plastered

1. The suffix *-kar* is a Marathi form and many Maratha families are known by the name of a place plus the syllable *-kar*, which literally means 'belonging to.'

2. Gond 'tombs' usually do not contain the corpse, but are cenotaphs erected over the place of cremation or funeral monuments, flags, *munda* (wooden posts) or mounds,

with cow dung. The shrine is open on all sides and contains a low forked wooden post carrying between its three or more rarely four prongs a large earthen pot covered with an upturned earthen saucer. This post (*kute*) consists usually of the natural triple crutch of a teak tree, which is stripped of bark but otherwise unworked. Recent innovations, however, are squared carved posts decorated with incised patterns, the four arms jointed by mortice and tenon. The earthen pot contains ritual objects used during the main cult acts: the whisk (*chauwur*), the brass bells, the red or white cloth and various smaller articles. Close to this post on a long board or a slightly raised mud platform, running parallel to the ridge pole, lie the *sati* small stones coated with red paint<sup>1</sup> and the *ban* flat earthen saucers as used for oil lamps also much bedaubed by red paint and hardly recognizable<sup>2</sup>. The *sati* whose number is generally equal to the clan's number of *wen*, represents legendary ancestors, whereas the *ban* commemorate members of the clan priest's and clan patel's family whose decease occurred in more recent times and whose names can still be recalled. In addition to the essential contents of the shrine there may be other sacred objects which tradition associates with that particular deity: a drum hanging up under the roof, spears planted in the ground or an iron or brass lamp holder standing besides the *sati* and *ban*. Quite often, however, the shrine is empty but for the pot, the *ban* and the *sati*, and in some shrines even these symbols are missing.

The most important of the Persa Pen symbols, the iron spearpoint or *sale*, is never kept in the shrine but is hidden after each ceremony in the forest in the branches of a mohur tree. Often a small crutch is made to house the *sale* which is taken down at the time of the principal rites. Its hiding place is, as a rule, known only to the *katora* or clan priest and one or two of his closest kinsmen.

Some fifty to a hundred yards from the shrine lies the *pen gara*, the gods' feast place, and there are usually to be found the framework of two square booths. These shelters must be built of *Boswellia serrata* posts which often take root and sprout so that the posts are crowned with leaves. At the time of feasts the framework is covered with leafy branches and the booths are used as sun shelters, the larger by the Gonds and the smaller by the Pardhans.

These are the general characteristics of cult places permanently located on the clan's hereditary land. Those Persa Pen that have been moved from their traditional site may no longer be associated with the

1. In the case of the Partash Persa Pen at Ballarpu, the mud platform is empty and the *sati* stones are kept in a small pot resting on the fork below the large earthen pot that contains the ritual objects. The *katora* explained that goats used to upset the stones, so now he keeps them in a pot for safety.

2. The Gonds usually speak of these *ban*, the replica plates of bent though also permissible as well as a board.



symbols of the ancestors, for these may have remained on the old clan-land or at any intermediate stage of the Persa Pen's migration.

The *chauwur* and *sale* are more than mere objects required for the worship of the Persa Pen; they are symbols of deities who collectively form the clan-god. The *sale* or iron spear-heads stand for the 'brothers' *sale* whose cult was initiated while the Gonds' ancestors dwelt in Dhanegaon. Some myths depict these *biradar sale* as four gods who came in person to Dhanegaon: Malesing Raitar, who became the god of the seven-brother folk, Rai Bandar, Renikunial Raitar, and Kati Kolasur Jeitur, who became respectively the gods of the six-, five- and four-brother folk. But other myths speak of the *sale* as iron spear-heads or staves given to the Gonds by Pahandi Kupa Lingal as symbols of their Persa Pen, and tell of the manner in which he obtained them from either Vias Guru or Rev Guru. Myths of another cycle, relate, however, that Rai Bandar,<sup>1</sup> Bandesara and Kati Kolasur turned into *sale* at the moment of their deification, and there is little attempt to reconcile these two origins of *sale*. The myths tell, however, that the four original *sale* were later divided so that each of the Gond clans branching from the four original kin-groups should have a symbol of Persa Pen. We shall hear of other ways in which newly separated clans or sub-clans are believed to be able to secure new *sale* through the direct intervention of their Persa Pen, but in the normal course of events there is no need for the acquisition of new *sale*, for unlike *chauwur* they do not wear out. I have never met a Gond who admitted to have first-hand knowledge of the making or purchasing of a new *sale*, but there can be little doubt that all the existing *sale* are the work of blacksmiths, and when Gonds talk of their traditional association with the Khatis, they seldom omit to mention the Khatis' function of making the sacred *sale*; the Hom Guru or Reva Guru of the myths being regarded as the first Khati.

The whisk or *chauwur* stands in most, though not in all, cases for a female deity, such as Sungalturpo revered by the six-brother clans, and Manko worshipped by all five-brother clans as well as certain clans of the three other phratries; the hair is said to represent the long tresses of the goddesses. In some clans of the four and seven-brother phratries both *sale* and *chauwur* are considered symbols of the god Kati Kolasur Jeitur and these *chauwur* are always white, whereas Sungalturpo and Manko are represented by black *chauwur*. The colour of the cloth used in dressing the *chauwur* is also prescribed by custom: Kati Kolasur Jeitur's and Sungalturpo's cloths are white, whereas a red cloth is used in association with Manko's black *chauwur*.

1. In explaining the identity of name between one of the original *biradar sale* and Sungalturpo's son Rai Bandar, a Pardhan suggested that Sungalturpo's son far from being identical with the original Persa Pen, was only named after him, in the same way as Gond children are often named after an important elder.

*Chauwur* bear a strong resemblance to the ceremonial fly whisks used in Indian court ceremonial and temple ritual and those I have seen were evidently made of yak's hair. Since in time the hair disintegrates there is a recognized procedure by which such a sacred object can be replaced. The Gonds believe that the *chauwur* are the tails of *pen mura* or god's cows, wild animals that occur in a distant country. To become suitable symbols for a Persa Pen the tails must be severed without the animals being seriously harmed. The hunters therefore dig pits on trails which the *pen mura* are known to frequent and there lie in wait until a god's cow passes, then with one stroke of the knife they cut off the tip of its tail. Where exactly the *pen mura* and their hunters live the Gonds do not know, but they do know that the tails may be purchased from shopkeepers of Wani caste at such places as Ghanda, Yeotmal and Amraoti.

When Gonds of Adilabad District want a new *chauwur* they usually go to Ghanda where rows of whisks hang in the shops of Wanis. Carefully they chose one which seems suitable, black or white according to the deity it is to represent. The Wani ties a thread to the *chauwur* chosen and puts it back in its place in the row. Before going to sleep that night the Gonds bathe and in their dreams the Persa Pen appears to one of them and either approves their choice or says 'I am not in that *chauwur*—I am in the fourth (or fifth or sixth) in the row'. Next morning the Gonds return to the shop and if their first choice has been wrong they point out the *chauwur* indicated by the deity and the shopkeeper again marks it with a thread. Once more the Gonds bathe and sleep hoping for a sign from the Persa Pen, usually their dreams will either confirm or reject their choice and it is said that often the dreams of five nights may be necessary to exclude all doubt, but when at last the right *chauwur* has been established, they go to the shop-keeper bow down, touch his feet in a deep reverence, and drop into the cloth which he holds ready, as many rupees as their clan has *wen*, one new cloth and a certain amount of grain. The Wani then hands over the *chauwur* and in return bows down and touches their feet. At the same time they also buy a new cloth white or red according to the deity, and a string of the same colour to bind the *chauwur* to the bamboo during the feast.

The brass bells (*gagra*) kept in every Persa Pen shrine are globular pellet bells, with a slit mouth opening. They are tied into one bunch and their number corresponds to the number of *wen* of the phratry, four five six or seven. As in a myth of Pahandi Kupaṛ Lingal they were obtained from a Wojari so to-day the Gonds have them made

1 Fly-whisk (*chamara*) played and still play an important role in the ritual of many Hindu temples and the waving of these *chamara* for the god during the processions used to be the privilege of the *san*, the female attendants of Hindu deities. It is not unlikely that the Gonds took over the fly-whisk from their Hindu neighbours but that its significance changed gradually and what had been a ritual accessory became to be regarded as a symbol of the deity.

to order by brass founders of Wojari caste. Their sanctity is not as great as that of *chauwur* and *sale*, and they do not represent any deity or mythical figure.

We shall see presently how during the great Persa Pen feasts, whisk, spear-head, brass bells and cloth are tied to a bamboo stave, and how thus a figure is created which throughout the rites is treated with the greatest reverence as the idol of the Persa Pen. To minister to this idol is the task of the *kaṭora*, the hereditary clan-priest, who plays the foremost rôle in the many rites and ceremonies constituting the cult of the clan-god.

Let us recall the mythical sanction of the *kaṭora*'s office. Pahandi Kupar Lingal is addressed by the goddess Jangu Bai as the *kaṭora* of all the Gond gods, and it was he who instructed the Gonds' ancestors in the worship of the Persa Pen. When they were divided into four phratries he appointed to each a *kaṭora* and with these *kaṭora* the Gonds migrated to the four villages which were to be the first stage in the process of their final dispersal.

To-day we find in each clan and sub-clan one family in which the office of *kaṭora* is hereditary. Usually the dignity passes from father to eldest son, but if necessary any member of the family can function and there are instances of distant kinsmen raising rival claims to the position of *kaṭora*. No special knowledge or ability are required to fulfil a *kaṭora*'s tasks, and the gift of becoming the mouthpiece, of a deity during a stage of trance is in no way connected with a *kaṭora*'s function. The duties of the clan-priest, though enormously important in establishing harmonious relations between the living clan-members and invisible forces including the spirits of ancestors and departed, in no way overlap with those of the *bhaktal* or seer, who can cut through the bar separating the worlds of human beings and spirits.

The *kaṭora*'s primary task is tending the ritual objects of his Persa Pen and the shrine sheltering them, and he is responsible for hiding the *sale*, the sacred spear-point, after each feast. If his clan-god has a permanent seat, he must live in the vicinity, but if the clan-god is movable, he is free to transfer the sacred objects to wherever he may choose to reside. The organization of the great clan-feasts and all other rites and ceremonies proper to the worship of the Persa Pen lie mainly in his hands, and if he neglects them or shows himself incompetent, another member of his family may claim the office and will usually find supporters among the clan-members. The two principal Persa Pen feasts are held in the months of Bhawe (May-June) and Pus (December-January), and a minor ceremony is often performed at the time of Dassera. Before each of the two great feasts the *kaṭora* sets out to collect contributions from the clan-members, a task which often involves a considerable amount of travelling; at the same time he announces the date of the ceremony. Those who will attend the feast make no cash

contributions and bring their own sacrificial animals and food offerings but clan members unable to join in the celebrations give the *katora* animals to sacrifice or any sum between a few annas and several rupees with which to buy animals to offer to the deity in their name. At the annual feasts, which will presently be described in full, the *katora* acts throughout as the priest, not so much as the mediator between the community and the godhead, as the representative of the community. At the most decisive phases of the worship, he steps back into the circle of the worshippers and prays with them and as one of them.

But there are times other than the great feasts when the *katora* fulfils important functions. Together with the Pardhan of the Persa Pen he keeps a mental record of all the members of his clan or sub-clan, and if any of them dies without near relations or in some distant place he must perform the ceremonies necessary to join their souls (*sanal*) to the Persa Pen and the company of the departed kinsmen. We shall see in Book II that all those Gonds who can possibly afford the expense perform for their deceased relatives elaborate memorial feasts (*pitre*) and moreover sacrifice a goat described as *tum* goat to their Persa Pen thereby munging the soul of the recently departed with the clan deity and the ancestors. But as some people die without relatives able or willing thus to provide for the comfort of their souls, the *katora* performs a simple rite every Karti month whereby these too are included in the community of the departed clan members. Then he sacrifices in his own house a chicken for each of the clan members who have died during that year and have remained unprovided for by any memorial rites then he spreads flour on the floor of his veranda to discover what shape the spirit (*juv*) of each individual has taken.<sup>1</sup> No public memorial rite may be performed for women who die in pregnancy, and the souls of such women too are joined to the clan deity by the *katora's* general rite in Karti. If a man has gone to live in some far away village and his death is rumoured the *katora* entrusts his Pardhan with the task of discovering his fate, and only performs the rites if his death is confirmed.

In times of illness a *katora* is sometimes approached by a member of his clan who wishes to know whether his illness is due to the displeas-

re of a deceased person. The *katora* then performs a rite to discover the cause of the illness. If it is found to be due to the displeasure of a deceased person, the *katora* performs a rite to appease the spirit of the deceased person. If the illness is found to be due to the displeasure of a deity, the *katora* performs a rite to appease the deity.

tain other deities. Those *katora* who never show signs of the mental state which Gonds interpret as possession by a deity—and we have mentioned already that such a psychic disposition is not required of a *katora*

<sup>1</sup> Gonds differentiate between the *sanal* the soul which joins the company of the Persa Pen and the Departed and is believed to partake of food-offerings and the *juv* the life spirit which goes to Sri Sumbha and may be reborn in either man or animal.

—may still have the capacity for dreams of a symbolic nature. To them the Persa Pen appears in the shape of a *kaṭora* riding on a horse, either white or black according to the colour of their *chauwur*.

The *kaṭora*'s wife, the *kaṭore* too has certain ritual functions; at the New Eating ceremonies of the small millets, it is she who does the ritual cooking of the new millet in whosoever's house the clan-members among the villages assemble for the rite, and on feast days she cleans and plasters the *sati* shrine with cow-dung.

Besides the *kaṭora*, who has both to minister at the sacrificial rites and tend the sacred objects, there is usually still another guardian of the clan-deity who is to-day described as the Persa Pen's *patla* or *patel*. Originally he was probably the hereditary headman of the locality containing the shrine of the deity and was thus partly responsible for its protection and upkeep. Nowadays the family may no longer furnish village headman, but still retain the old religious function. The *patel*'s duties are not clearly defined; he usually lends a hand in the organization of the feasts in honour of the clan-god, and there are cases where the shrine is in his village while the *kaṭora* lives in some other village and comes only during the times of the feasts.

Moreover some clan-deities stand under the special protection of a family of rajas, and even where these have lost all secular influence they are still known as the 'rajas' *vis-à-vis* the Persa Pen; during the annual rites their rôle is slightly different from that of ordinary clan-members.

The fourth and by no means least important of the functionaries responsible for the performance of the rites and ceremonies in the traditional manner is the Pardhan of the Persa Pen, who is at the same time generally the House Pardhan of the *kaṭora*. Long before the annual feasts are due to start he assists the *kaṭora* in collecting contributions from distant clan-members, sometimes accompanying him and sometimes touring their villages on his own. Once the ceremonies have begun, his is a vital rôle. During the central rite when the god-head is near and the noise of drums and trumpets dies reverently, the soft sounds of his fiddle swing through the stillness, and his voice, never raised, intones the ancient hymns that express the mystery of the rites, the unity of all clan-members and their union with the Persa Pen. And afterwards when, the ritual completed, the clansmen and villagers relax in the enjoyment of the feast, he recites with his two assistants, who are usually his sons or brother's sons, the sacred myths of the origin of the Gonds and his own clan-deities. He is the repository of tradition, and though many Gonds may have a fairly good knowledge of their own clan-myths, it is generally only the Pardhan who can recite the epics in their full poetic form. True, in case of emergency, when the hereditary head of the Persa Pen is unable to attend the feast and no member of his own family or sub-clan is there to take his place, a Pardhan

of another clan, but of the same phiatry, may be hired to play at the ceremonies, his performance is however devoid of all sanctity, and important phases of the ritual must be omitted.

The clan priest, the guardian of the Persa Pen, the Pardhan, and to a lesser degree the raja, are all responsible for the performance of the rites for the Persa Pen on which the well being of the clan depends. But the responsibility is not theirs alone, the feast is the concern of the whole clan and particularly of the clan members residing in the village where the shrine of the Persa Pen is located. For the annual rites sus-

the importance attached to them by the Gonds and the reverence displayed in their performance, but also in the elaboration and expense of the ritual. The violent quarrels between rival sections of a clan for the privilege of conducting the rites and housing the Persa Pen in their village lands, are, though defeating the unifying function of the cult, convincing proof of the Gonds' belief in the powerful forces inherent in the ritual objects and released during the performance of the rites. For side by side with the idea of the invisible deity in whose cult *chauwur* and *sale* are only instrumental symbols, there is also the firm belief in the supernatural virtue of these objects which exert of themselves a beneficial influence on their surroundings.

Who are the deities beyond these visible symbols, in themselves so full of magical power? The answer to this question is not simple, for the myths sung by Pardhans and the prayers said at the annual rites seem to tell different tales. We have already quoted some of these myths and have seen how they describe the transformation of human or semi human personages into deities with *chauwur* and *sale* as their tangible symbols. When questioned both Gonds and Pardhans say that these deities usually a duality of a male and a female deity, are their Persa Pen, and it is significant that they use invariably the singular form *pen* and not the plural *penk*, though in other connections two or more gods are referred to as *penk*. The verbs stand in the singular for subjects, whereas as Sri Shembu Maha

Bandesara though treated before their deification as two separate human beings and referred to by verbs in the corresponding masculine and feminine forms, are from the moment of their metamorphosis described collectively as *pen* or *ratar* in the singular form with verbs also in singular feminine neuter forms. Yet in the prayers at the great clan god feasts and 'Ratar' as well as

Pardhan quite see the

inconsistency in this description of two divine figures, male and female, as a single *pen* used with verbs in the singular, nor has any Gond or Pardhan, however well versed in religious lore, ever been able to offer a satisfactory explanation.

The general belief among the Gonds is that the members of each of the four phratries worship their own deities, whose origin and history is known in detail only to the Pardhans and the Gonds of that phratry. But no complete agreement exists between the Pardhans of various clans, and different myths of origin are told by Pardhans of one and the same phratry.

Some Gonds, particularly those living far from the seat of their clan-god, declare that they do not know the name of their Persa Pen, but invoke in prayers Persa Pen Raitar without giving any thought to individual names. Such an attitude may be due to the wide dispersal of families and sub-clans under modern conditions and to the loosening of the ties between *katoṛa*, Pardhans and clan-members. But it may be of significance that the greatest ignorance about the name and history of the deities revered as Persa Pen prevails among members of the seven- and four-brother phratries, whose mythology seems to lack indeed in both clarity and consistency. Among members of five- and six-brother clans on the other hand, one finds seldom a man who will not name Manko and Bandesara or Sungalturpo and Rai Bandar as the deities worshipped at the Persa Pen feasts of his clan.

Once, when in an assembly of many important Gonds after a funeral we had had a long and inconclusive discussion as to who exactly was the Persa Pen of the four-brother and the seven-brother *saga*, I suggested that these two *saga* had originally perhaps no Persa Pen of their own, but coming from some other land, saw the five- and six-brother folk worshipping *sale* and *chaitwur* and adopted the custom. After a moment's surprise this idea was discussed with much eagerness and hilarity; the men of five- and six-brother clans were well content with the suggestion that their example should have been imitated by the two other *saga*, and a Mesram man of the Buigoita branch meekly admitted that even now they had no Persa Pen of their own but worshipped Sri Shek. There were no men of the four-brother phratry present, but Atram Bhim Rao, the Raja of Kanchanpalli, and one of the most educated Gonds, remarked that it was strange indeed how none of them could say who was the Persa Pen of the seven- and four-brother people, while every child knew the names of Manko and Sungalturpo.

Let us review briefly what the myths tell about the nature of the individual Persa Pen:

The mythical figures worshipped by all members of the five-brother phratry are Manko and her son Bandesara. Though Renikunial Raitar is mentioned in one myth as the original *biradar sale* of the five-brother folk, this name is nowadays seldom invoked in prayers. Manko

was the daughter of a *rahshasa* and wife of Dundria Raur, the legendary chief of the five-brother folk. Expelled by Dundria Raur in anger over the disgrace she brought on his house by her *rahshasa* habits, she went into exile and there gave birth to a son, Bandesara, who was reared by water spirits.

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Manko and Bandesara turned into gods, in place of their human forms appeared a *chauwur* and a *sale*, and henceforth they were worshipped by the Raur folk.

The Pandwen Saga, which comprises the clans sprung from the original six brothers, worships Sungalturpo and her son Rai Bandar, whose fate and deification resemble in many ways those of Manko and Bandesara. Sungalturpo was the daughter of a Maravi man and wife of Voyal Konda Voja who led the six brother folk from Dhanegaon to Jamtokorvelikinagur. Doubting Sungalturpo's faithfulness he drove her from his house and in exile in the company of tigers, she gave birth to a son whom she called Rai Bandar. Misfortunes made Voyal Konda Voja regret his rash action, and he sent his Pardhan in search of Sungalturpo. After twelve years she was found but when she approached Jamtokorvelikinagur, she and her son Rai Bandar turned into gods. *Chauwur* and *sale* appeared miraculously in their stead and with these symbols the Gonds of Jamtokorvelikinagur started to worship Sungalturpo and Rai Bandar as their Persa Pen. Here as in the previous myth the rites in honour of the Persa Pen are effective in ending the calamity and restoring prosperity to the worshippers.

The seven brother clans, with the single exception of the Buigotta branch of the Mesram clan, worship as Persa Pen Malesing Raitar, one of the original *biradar sale* and still represented by an iron spear head. Though occurring in several myths among the gods invoked by the seven brothers, little else is known of its origin. Associated with the *sale* standing for Malesing Raitar is in some clans a black *chauwur*, representing Manko, and the worship of the deity so definitely linked with the five brother folk is explained by her visit to the seven Panior brothers at the time of her expulsion from Gudmasur Patern. Then she gave to the Panior brothers in return for gifts of friendship, a lock of her hair, and the black *chauwur* revered by many seven brother clans symbolizes the hair of Manko.

But some clans of the six brother and seven brother phratries have also a white *chauwur*.

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There can be no reasonable doubt that the deity—or deities—

known as Kati Kolasur Jatur are associated with the four brother folk.



But only one of the myths relating to Kati Kolasur Jeitur falls into line with the far more widely known myths of Manko and Sungalturpo. Most Gonds and Pardhans of Adilabad know next to nothing of the origin and nature of Kati Kolasur Jeitur, and the peculiar position of the Persa Pen of the four brother clans finds expression in the custom which forbids women to come anywhere near the white *chauwur*. Although it stands to reason that the *chauwur* represents only the female part of a dual deity—according to one myth the mother Jeitur—we would credit the Gonds with too rational and consistent an attitude if we assumed that they saw in the white *chauwur* only the symbol of the deified Jeitur just as they see in the black *chauwur* the symbol of Manko. I believe that the overwhelming majority of the Gonds of Adilabad regard the white *chauwur* as the symbol of a deity known to them as Kati Kolasur Jeitur and generally thought of as a male god. Some of them may conclude on reflection that a *chauwur* represents usually only a female deity, but such theological speculation has little place in the thoughts of the average Gond, and there are few who will search for the reason why the white *chauwur* of Kati Kolasur Jeitur is dangerous to women and may not even be brought to a village, while the symbol of Manko is at every feast taken into the houses of her worshippers.

The phratry or sub-phratry, which breaks the regularity of the four kin-groups (*saga*) is the Sarpe *Saga*, consisting of the eight clans worshipping the goddess Jangu Bai. Descended from a tigress, and born long after the ancestors of the other Gonds had been liberated from the primeval cave and established in Dhanegaon, the forefather of this *saga* has, according to the myths, no direct connection with the four other phratries. But to-day the eight clans of the Sarpe *Saga* are reckoned for purposes of exogamy among those of the six-brother phratry, and in the ritual of their clan-feasts they use a set of six bells and a bamboo stave of six nodes. Both their *sale* and their white *chauwur* are believed to be symbols of Jangu Bai, but although the clans of the Sarpe *Saga* perform rites identical with the Persa Pen rites of other phratries, there can be no doubt that Jangu Bai stands on a level quite different from that of Persa Pen of other phratries.

Certain clans of the Sarpe *Saga* possess not only a white *chauwur* but also a black *chauwur* representing Manko, and this suggests the idea, that some of the deities figuring prominently in the Persa Pen cult have no exclusive link with any particular phratry, but are worshipped singly and in pairs by clans of various phratries. Indeed the possibility cannot be excluded that the deities represented by *chauwur* and *sale* are tutelary gods and deified ancestors associated with the Persa Pen who is not symbolized by any material object and is devoid of an individual name.

While the traditional ritual of the Persa Pen cult is based on the

existence of a *chauwur* as well as a *sale*, and the overwhelming majority of clans and sub clans is in possession of both these objects, there are a few exceptional cases of clans lacking either the one or the other and yet performing most of the Persa Pen rites according to the usual pattern. A most remarkable instance of a Persa Pen without *chauwur* is that of the clan god of the Purka clan belonging to the seven *wen* phratry.

The shrine of the Purka Persa Pen lies on the hill Wotegarh, which overlooks the Moar valley and in the old times was surmounted by a fort belonging to the Purka people. To day only remnants of the old fort still stand, and the *katora* lives at the foot of the hill in the village of Ballarpur. Tradition tells that the original home of the Purka clan was further to the east in the present taluq of Both and that at the time when their clansmen first settled on Wotegarh hill they brought with them a *sale* and a white *chauwur* whose haft carried a golden band. Both *sale* and *chauwur* represented Kati Kolasur Jetur, or, according to some clan members Kati Kolasur and his wife, who had no separate name of her own. Once during the annual Persa Pen feast after they had taken *sale* and *chauwur* for the ritual bath in the sacred black waters of the Moar river and returned to the hill top of Wotegarh to start the sacrificial rites, the *chauwur* refused the offerings of chickens and goats and cows and demanded through the mouth of the seer the sacrifice of a 'two legged goat'. The Purka men under

together with bells, cloth and bamboo into the river<sup>1</sup>. Then they returned to Wotegarh and continued the ceremonies, sacrificing a goat and a cow before the *sale*. Ever since all rites have been performed without *chauwur*, bells, cloth or bamboo-stick, without resulting in any ill effects to the people of the Purka clan. It is generally believed that only clan deities with ritual objects made of gold are prone to demand human sacrifices, and no other clan god is attributed nowadays with the desire for human victims,<sup>2</sup> for the sacred bells made by Wojaris are of brass.

The idea is widespread, however, that the great power of a Persa Pen set free during the rites of a feast, can work for evil as well as for good and become dangerous to bystanders. Thus it is said that the great Atram Persa Pen of Sitagondi is no longer carried to the Pedda

1. This alleged reluctance of the Purka people to comply with the deity's demand for a human sacrifice should not be taken as an indication that all Gonds have always been averse to human sacrifice. Indeed we shall see that the custom has survived until recent times. Cf. C. von Furer-Hamendorf, *Beliefs conce. a. ag. Human Sacrifice among the Hill Reddis*. *Man in India* Vol. XXIV (1944) p. 27.

2. The Here Numra and Marapa clans of the Sarpe Saja have however the tradition that on one occasion their ancestors sacrificed humans to Jangra Bai. Cf. p. 173.

Vagu for the ritual bath, because the lives of the people in the villages on the way were endangered by the god. Even to worshippers the Persa Pen might prove dangerous were it not for the magical power of the Pardhan's fiddle, which charms and intimidates the god, just as the music of the Pardhan of the myths tamed the terrible Persa Pen, when the Gonds began his worship.<sup>1</sup>

While in the case of the Purka Persa Pen the *chauwur* is missing, the Rai Siram Persa Pen at Mangi lacks a *sale*, and it is believed that the original *sale* of the clan never left Pahirmunda in the Central Provinces, the original *watan*, when a section of the clan migrated southwards. That even both *sale* and *chauwur* can be dispensed with in the Persa Pen rites is proven by the Persa Pen of the Banda sub-section of the Pendur clan. The shrine of the Persa Pen is in Both Taluq and contains neither *chauwur* nor *sale*; a sacred stone (*banda*) is the principal ritual object and, like *chauwur* and *sale* elsewhere, this stone is carried about in procession.

How clan-gods without *sale* or *chauwur* have come into being is well illustrated by an occurrence of recent years. The Persa Pen of the Borikar section of the Pendur clan, was originally at Bori in Chanda District; some generations ago it was brought to Garh Jamni in Rajura Taluq. From there the ritual objects were taken to Garh Nokari and guarded by the god's patel Pendur Polu. Five years ago there was a quarrel between the clan-members; the *kaṭora* Malku seized the *sale* and took it to Hatloni, a village in the plains, but the *patel* Polu refused to let the *chauwur* go, and continues to celebrate the annual feasts. At these he uses a brass vessel of long-standing association with the other ritual objects as a substitute for the *sale*, and this is carried round with the *chauwur* and plays the rôle proper to the *sale*. The *kaṭora*, on the other hand, who is in possession of the *sale*, performs no public ceremonies, and few know where he keeps it hidden.

Further back lies a dispute connected with the Kotnaka clan-god which also resulted in the setting up of two separate cult-centres. It is said that many generations ago, during a Persa Pen feast held at Bari, the old *watan* of the Kotnaka clan, the *kaṭora* ran short of water, just as he was about to offer the sacrificial food. He bade his younger brother go quickly to the well. Meanwhile the first cock crowed and the *katora* fearing that the sun might rise before the rites were completed, hurriedly offered the food to the godhead omitting the obligatory sprinkling of freshly drawn water. When the younger brother returned to find the ceremony over, he abused the *katora* for continuing the rites in his absence and in the ensuing quarrel seized upon a sacred stone kept always with the ritual objects and ran off to another village. Many generations ago this stone had been brought from the sacred

1. Cf. p. 121, Footnote 1.

Sasarakunda Falls and the *katora's* brother employed it in setting up a cult centre of his own, he used the stone instead of a *sale* and brought a new *chauvur* from Chandr, the sub clan he established became known as Warakar<sup>1</sup>

We have heard already how new *chauvur* may be bought from shop keepers of Wani caste. New *sale* cannot be obtained so easily and I was frequently assured that it would be useless to order a *sale* from a blacksmith. The Gonds believe however that men of special merit are capable of coming by new *sale* they may find one in the forest leaning against a mahua tree or in their heaped grain on their threshing floors after harvest. No such cases have occurred in recent times but it is said that in the past when the younger brother or son of a clan priest set out to found a new clan centre, he prayed to his Persa Pen and if his prayer was granted he found a *sale* while walking through the forest or when measuring his threshed grain. Clan deities with *sale* found in grain are therefore called Jawa Pen—*jawa* being the grain constituting the Gonds' staple food.

With this we come to the classification of clan-deities into Persa Pen Jawa Pen and—as a third variety—Sawere Pen. In daily use every clan deity is referred to as Persa Pen but in theory there is a difference between the original Persa Pen of a clan whether still on the old clan land or not and the younger offshoot established by the founders of sub-clans and known as Jawa Pen. This difference is of very little practical importance and finds no expression in any variation of ritual the feasts for both Persa and Jawa Pen being performed on identical lines. Where the sub-clans have long been separated one may even experience difficulties in discovering which of the clan deities is a Persa Pen and which are Jawa Pen, for the members of a sub-clan are often loathe to admit the relative status of their own clan god. Yet when the clan's Persa Pen is still at the original clan centre such as the Atram Persa Pen at Sitagondi, his superior antiquity and status is generally recognized even by the members of other sub-clans. Sawere Pen are only found in possession of raja families and it is said that in the old times the *chauvur* and *sale* of such deities were carried into battle when the rajas went to war. To-day the rôle of the Sawere Pen is not clearly defined for while some Sawere Pen have become the centres of new sub-clans such as the Sirpurkar Sawere Pen of the Atram clan others remain little more than house gods, or at the best subsidiary clan deities and their adherents continue to worship their original Persa Pen. Thus the Atram raja family of Pangri the village at the foot of the Sitagondi hill worships both the Persa Pen of Sitagondi and a Sawere Pen of its

1. The explanation for the naming of this sub-clan is that since the sacred objects of the Persa Pen, a lad and the stone, were laid out in the *wara*, a walled courtyard, and stolen from there the name *Wa aks* was given to the new sub-clan.

2. This view is, of course, inconsistent with the idea that the original *sale* was made by Revu Gura, the first Khat. All *sale* are upon heads obviously fashioned in the ordinary way.

own, which is housed in a shrine near the raja's homestead.

Associated with the Persa Pen of the clans of certain rajas and mokashi are deities that symbolize the secular power of the rulers and are known as Betal Pen. These are represented by five stones, and sometimes a flag, set on a hill-top, the stones being arranged in a square with one in the middle. Unlike the *sati* and *ban*, the Betal Pen is not a deified ancestor, but a "god of Devastan." The Mokashi of Kara Kampa, for instance, has a Betal Pen on a hill near his ancient seat of residence. At the full moon of Divali Gonds, Pardhans and Kolams assemble on that hill before the stones symbolizing the Betal Pen; close-by there are flags and earthen and brass figures of horses and horsemen with bows, all brought there in fulfilment of vows. Only men participate in the sacrificial rite, which culminates in the slaughter of goats and chickens. In stories and myths the square of the Betal is the place where men are possessed by the Betal Pen and in the thrall of the godhead perform sword and spear dances; they jump from one stone to the other until at last they leap on to the central stone, brandishing their weapons. A modified form of these spear and sword dances can still be seen at the end of many Persa Pen feasts, when before the *chau-wur* and *sale* are put away young men possessed by Betal Pen seize the spears and swords kept with the ritual objects of the clan-deities and dance fiercely on any level piece of ground near the *pen-gara*. Some Gonds say now that the Betal Pen dwells in these sacred weapons, but this view is not generally accepted and may be due to a shifting of ideas following the abandonment of the sites with the original Betal stones.

#### *History and Fortunes of the Kanaka Clan Deities.*

In any general description of the one or other aspect of Gond culture we run the risk of drawing a picture far more systematic and logical than the realities of tribal life and tradition warrant. And this is not only due to the observer's wish to fit facts together. The Gonds, and to an even greater extent the Pardhans, have the definite tendency to simplify in their minds the intricacies of their ritual organization and to evolve, so to say, an official theory which is often fairly remote from actual usage. The cult of the clan-deities is not excepted from this treatment, and by taking statements and explanations of Gonds and Pardhans at their face value one might easily arrive at a picture which seems co-ordinated and lucid, but represents only half the truth. To understand the place of the Persa Pen cult in present day Gond life it will therefore be useful to observe the fate of an individual clan-deity, or, to be more precise, of a set of ritual objects pertaining to an individual clan-deity.

The deity convenient for our purpose, owing to its present connection with the village of Marlavai, is the clan-god or Persa Pen of a section of the Kanaka *pari*, a clan of the five-brother phratry.

The Kanaka *pari*, like most clans, is divided into several sub-clans (*khandan*), each in possession of a Persa Pen, called after a locality which once contained and in some cases still contains the shrine. Within Adilabad District there are five Kanaka sub-clans, and their respective Persa Pen are known as Motagudkar, Sankapallikar, Derakar, Ramaihar, and Parsikar. Tradition tells that the original Persa Pen was at Motagudem, a now deserted village site in the hills (cf p 76) which was then the centre of the Kanaka clan land. Closely associated with the Motagudem Persa Pen was the village mother goddess of Motagudem, known as Motagudem Auwal, who is even to-day one of the most prominent mother goddesses of the Gond country and her shrine is the object of many pilgrimages. At one time, it is said, there were five brothers in the family of the *katora*, the clan deity's hereditary priest and while the eldest remained in Motagudem his brothers emigrated set up separate cult centres and began to worship the Persa Pen in their respective villages. Procuring a whisk (*chauwur*) and an iron spear head (*sale*) as symbols of the deities Manko and Badesara, each founded a new lineage (*khandan*) with a separate Persa Pen. These new sets of ritual objects or idols which in Gond usage are often loosely referred to as separate Persa Pen while in reality they are all used in the service of the same clan god had varying fortunes as in the course of generations the *katora* moved, and in moving took them from place to place.

The Persa Pen called Derakar was first established and remained for many years, if not generations, in the now deserted village of Dera in Both Taluq. From there the *katora* took the ritual objects to the village of Donobanda in Lakshetipet Taluq more than fifty miles from Dera. Next they were brought to Rali in Asifabad Taluq where the *sati* or symbols of prominent ancestors are still to be found. Within the memory of this generation the idols have been moved to several villages of the Sirpur area and lastly to Marlavai. But when in 1940 the *katora* decided to go to live in Gerjam in Both Taluq he took the Persa Pen with him and there built a shrine for the symbols. Gerjam, however, is a village with a mixed population and it is difficult to guard the sensitive Persa Pen against defilement by castes other than Gond. The story goes that before the first big feast was held in Gerjam, the *katora* warned all Bestas Madigas and other villagers of low caste to stay in their houses when the procession headed by the *katora* carrying *chauwur* and *sale* passed through the village. But they made light of the warning and when they heard the drums and trum-

bathed in a nearby stream.

But the potential risks of contact with strangers are not the only

difficulty with which the guardians of a Persa Pen may be confronted. More frequent are the disturbances created by quarrels with other clansmen who claim the privilege of guardianship and the performance of the ritual. Since most families of both the priests and the traditional guardians of clan-gods have long split into several branches, there exists as a rule quite a number of men with an equally good claim to the cherished dignity. The principle that possession is in itself a legal title is not accepted, and the idols of many a Persa Pen have been carried off secretly or by force by clansmen who felt morally justified or sufficiently sure of their supporters to brave the *kaṭōra's* wrath. There are, of course, still Persa Pen permanently associated with a locality, such as the Atram clan-god at Sitagondi or the Pandra clan-god at Rompalli, and no Gond would consider their removal from their traditional sites. But others have long been separated from the original centre of their clan, and it is these Persa Pen which form the object of quarrels and rivalries.

A dispute which has gone on for at least three generations concerns the possession of the Motagudkar Persa Pen. At present there are two claimants to the function of *kaṭōra*, Kanaka Lachu of Marlavai and Kanaka Badu of Chudur Koinur, and though Lachu has temporarily prevailed and the Persa Pen is at the time of writing in Marlavai, the quarrel has by no means ended.

It seems that some three generations ago the Motagudkar Persa Pen was in Ippalnaogaon, a village in the plains, not far from Asifabad. How long before the symbols had been removed from their former seat at Motagudem, it is hard to say, but it seems probable that their removal coincided with the abandonment of Motagudem as a settlement, perhaps at the time of the dispersal of the Kanaka clan. While the idols were at Ippalnaogaon the *kaṭōra* lived in the nearby Peddapuram. For some reason Badu's grandfather took the Persa Pen from Peddapuram to Dhanora, a village in the hills not far from Marlavai and Koinur, and from that time on the *kaṭōra* living at Peddapuram no longer attended the annual rites, but Badu's grandfather functioned as *kaṭōra*. During one of the subsequent Persa Pen feasts held in Dhanora, Kanaka men of Seti Harapnur, Marlavai and other neighbouring villages came to take part in the ceremonies, and during the phase in which individual clansmen dance with *chawwur* and *sale* they too were handed the sacred symbols. But instead of circling in traditional manner round the feast-place, they gradually danced away from the worshippers and when the *kaṭōra*, realizing too late that something was wrong, tried to recover the idols, they declared their intention of taking the Persa Pen away and held off the *kaṭōra* and his people with the swords and guns which they had brought to the feast. In great anger the *kaṭōra* took some sand and with five breaths blew it from the palm of his hand after the robbers, uttering the curse that they all should die and become as sand.

Among the party that carried off the Persa Pen were the grandfather of Kanaka Lachu, father of Kanaka L. Rajas Dissatisfic they took the idols first to Harapnur, and for some years performed the Persa Pen feast there. But perhaps the *katora's* curse weighed on them, for a series of misfortunes and bad crops made them doubt their own efficiency in propitiating the deity, and after some time they relinquished their claim on the Persa Pen and handed the idols to clansmen living in the plains villages of Mudapuram, who summoned the original *katora* of Peddapuram to perform the annual rites. During the subsequent years the ritual objects were moved successively to Makulpeta, Lingapuram, Devangudem and back to Makulpeta. All that time the *katora* residing in Peddapuram functioned at all acts of worship.

A new generation of Kanaka men grew up and, as their fathers died they renewed the dispute. It was now Badu's father Ramu, who claimed the idols, but a great council of elders presided over by the Gond Raja Jagpat Rao—then a young boy—decided that Ramu should be the *patel*, the guardian of the Persa Pen, but not the *katora*. After long negotiations he was allowed to take the idols to Koinur, but his triumph was short lived. One night Kanaka Sungo, Kodu's father, the headman of Marlavai, went secretly to the shrine and carried off the Persa Pen idols to his village. For two years he performed the rites in Marlavai, but when he died his brother Somu went to live in Pulera taking the Persa Pen with him. Somu, however, died four years afterwards, and the idols were left in the care of his young son Isru, who kept them hidden in the forest.

But Ramu of Koinur still plotted to recover them, and one day he approached the boy and feigning friendliness invited him to drink palm wine at Pangri, where there is a grove of toddy palms. His tongue loosened by drink, the boy disclosed the hiding place of the ritual objects, and the same night Ramu and his friends stole them and removed them to Koinur. There for many years they remained, and Ramu acted not only as *patel* but also as *katora*. On his death his son Badu succeeded to the double function, but a large number of clansmen were dissatisfied with this arrangement and refused to attend the feasts, saying that Badu's ministrations were ineffective and that consequently many misfortunes had befallen the clan.

Under this pressure on Badu that he consented to give up the Persa Pen and of his own accord brought the pot with the sacred objects, the *sale* and a small spear to Marlavai.



*A Persa Pen Feast at Marlavai.*

The great festival in honour of the Kanaka clan-god, whose idols the Marlavai men had secured after so long a quarrel was postponed from day to day. The moon of Persa Bhawe, the proper month for the ceremonies, had long waned and people of other clans had returned from the feasts of their own clan-deities. But the sacred objects of the Kanaka Persa Pen remained at the Aki Pen, the Village-Guardian, in the earthen pot in which they had been brought from Koinur. Many were the reasons for this delay; the sacrificial rites for the family deities of the village<sup>1</sup> had first to be performed, goats and a cow for slaughter had to be procured, clan-members and the indispensable Pardhans had to be summoned. At last when all seemed ready, the wives of two important Kanaka men of Marlavai menstruated, and since this would have prevented their husbands from participating in the ceremonies it was decided to hold up the proceedings till both women had ended their period.

On the day after the full moon of Bur Bhawe (31st May 1942'), all preparations for the ceremonies were completed. With the moon rising over the edge of the wooded ridge and quiet reigning in the village, six men went silently to the Aki post and lit a small fire. They were Kanaka Lachu, in whose family the function of *kaṭora* or clan-priest had long been hereditary, Kanaka Kodu,<sup>2</sup> who claims descent from a line of Kanaka Rajas, Kanaka Badu, whose family furnishes traditionally the *patel* of the Persa Pen, and three men of clans standing in marriage relationship with the Kanaka people. Carefully they took the sacred objects from the pot, bathed them with water and then sacrificed a chicken; they offered a small piece of roasted liver to the deity, cooked and ate the chicken on the spot and then, having replaced the sacred objects in the pot, returned to the village as silently as they had come. While this preparatory rite was being performed in the fields before the Aki Pen, lights were lighted in the shrines of Bhimana, Rajul Pen and Dauval Malkal, the three 'family-deities' of Marlavai.

Next morning at the first cock's crow the roar of drums and the wail of Pardhan trumpets pierced the stillness. The men of Kanaka clan and a few other villagers had already assembled at the Aki Pen and the shrine of Mora Auwal, whose worship was also to be performed that day, and simultaneously they sacrificed a fowl to both Persa Pen and Auwal. The *kaṭora* conducted the rite for the Persa Pen and Badu, the brother's son of the 'owner' of the Auwal, ministered to this mother-deity so closely associated with the Kanaka clan. Both addressed the deity with a prayer for protection against all dangers:

1. There were at the time three such deities in Marlavai (cf. p. 93) and ten days before the celebration of the clan-god feast they were worshipped with elaborate ceremonies.

2. Kannan Kodu is incidentally also *devari* or village-priest of Marlavai.

We give you chicken, eggs, and sweet-  
ened *dal*,  
May fortune favour us;  
Crush our enemies under foot  
Going in front, coming behind,  
May your blessing shield us;  
May we meet no tigers,  
May they flee from us,  
Seeing us, may they run away

*Alomaj niku feri menj papu falar  
anton,  
mak pahu uara;  
dan dumanjun jatu uaja  
soneke mune, aneke paja,  
fahli mar;  
mak dual bete maiia,  
habri sodiana,  
makon suru sodiana.*

This prayer said, small pieces of roasted liver and millet brought cooked from the houses, were offered on *mura*<sup>1</sup> leaves to the deities. While at the pot of the Persa Pen only men of Kanaka clan partook of the chicken, the assembly at the Auwal shrine was less exclusive, and men of several clans shared in the meal of chicken curry and millet.

Dawn blunted the fine points of the stars as the worshippers returned to their houses, where they snatched a little rest before the ceremonies

Persa Pen pot, which must never be left unattended until the close of the festival.

When the people had eaten their breakfast porridge, most of the men gathered on the newly ploughed field where the great pot containing the ritual objects still stood before the Aki post. The *katoja* Lachu, with several young men of his own as well as of *soira* clans, now opened the pot: they took out the sacred whisk (*chauu*<sup>2</sup>) of the goddess Manko, the spear-head<sup>2</sup> (*sale*) of her son Badesara, a set of five large brass bells and nine stones thickly covered with red paint, the *sati* or symbols of ancestors. The first task was to wash the black whisk with four substances: they brought four small brass vessels filled with water, cow's urine, cow's milk and oil, and while Kodapa Kasi held the whisk

poured carefully over the hair till it shone in the sun (Fig. 40). In a similar manner they washed the sacred spear-head and finally the *ve wen* of the Kanaka, spear-headed spears were the Aki post beside a god's cult objects, which had stood erect ever since it had been brought there from Koinur together with the symbols of the Persa Pen.

1 *Buten frondosa*

2. Normally the *sale* is never kept in the pot with the other ritual objects, but on this occasion it had been put into the pot for the transfer from Koinur to Maraval.



FIG. 39. The ritual  
bathing of the *sale*  
at a Persa Pen feast  
in Marlavai.



FIG. 40. The ritual  
bathing of the  
*chaurour* at a Persa  
Pen feast in  
Marlavai.

The ceremonial bathing over, the *kaṭora* and his *soira*, young men of six-brother clans,<sup>1</sup> took the other sacred objects from the pot: a red cloth with tasselled end, a small strip of a similar red cloth and a length of twine. Kodapa Kasi bound the strip of cloth round the head of a bamboo with five nodes; over this he tied the red cloth and fitted the bamboo into the hollow haft of the whisk, so that the black hair fell over the upper edge of the cloth. The brass bells were tied tightly to the head of the bamboo, under the hair, and then the *kaṭora* picked up the sacred spear-head and reverently tied it to the bamboo, under the cloth.

The idol was now ready for the ceremonies, and the *kaṭora*, grasping it in two hands, planted the bamboo firmly in the ground beside the Aki post. There it stood, slightly shorter than a man, glistening black hair streaming and red cloth billowing in the breeze, while men and boys quickly grouped themselves into a semi-circle, open to the east (Fig. 41). To one side the Pardhans and two Gond drummers squatted with their instruments. Kanaka Chitru, the white-moustached Pardhan of the Persa Pen, had hung up his fiddle on his short spear, *kaniyal gorka*, thrust into the ground, but now he took it down and began tuning, while his son and nephew wetted the mouthpieces of their trumpets and two Gonds tilted their cylindrical, double-membrane drums, while a third put an iron kettle drum between his legs. Suddenly drums thundered, trumpets blared, and the *kaṭora* took his place in front of the idol, dropped a few grains of incense on a piece of smouldering wood, waved it twice in front of the idol, and raised it to chin-level as he stood a few moments motionless before the deity, silently praying; then he made the round of the semi-circle of worshippers from left to right and as he passed the Gonds cupped their hands over the embers as though gathering some of the fragrance of the incense in their palms; replacing the incense before the idol, the *kaṭora* stepped back into the semi-circle. All stood a few moments with folded hands praying silently for protection and prosperity, in the same terms as they had done earlier in the morning. At the end of the prayer, as at one command, they threw themselves full length on the ground, remaining face downwards for a moment, and then stood up again.

The *kaṭora* now went up to the idol and with a single movement wrenched the bamboo from the ground, while two of his *soira* shouldered the large spears, and several young boys of *soira* clans picked up the baskets that held the *sati* stones and other ritual objects. Led by the *kaṭora* carrying the Persa Pen, the bearers of the sacred objects made the round of the semi-circle, greeting each man with a formal embrace and the words *Ram, Ram*. As the *kaṭora* solemnly paced from man to man, he softly shook the idol so that the five brass bells

1. It is the duty and privilege of the *soira* to bathe and assemble the symbols of the Persa Pen in readiness for the rites; in this task they are guided by the *kaṭora*.

tinkled incessantly; the Pardhans played to it on *kingri* and trumpets, and the drummers kept up a subdued tremolo. Some of the worshippers simply returned the *katoṛa's* embrace and saluted with folded hands, others bowed down and touched his feet with their forehead, while two men possessed of the godhead as the idol approached, threw themselves to the ground, their bodies trembling in the grip of an invisible force. Even after the *katoṛa's* passing they could not rise, but continued to writhe and jerk on the sun-baked furrows. The round of . . . . . who rose and

. . . . . pot with the ritual objects had been huilt several days before at no great distance from the shrines of Bhimana and Rajul Pen, the *pen-gara*, the site where the rites were to take place, had not yet been chosen. All the materials had been kept in readiness for the booths, hut newly arrived in the village the Persa Pen must choose the site for the feast-place. So that the divine will might be revealed, the idol was handed to Kursenga Madu, the *bhaktal* or seer of the village. More sensitive than other mortals to supernatural voices, he was at once filled with the power of the godhead and began swaying violently to and fro. Holding the sacred symbols in both hands and supported by two men he led the procession across the fields to the shrines of Bhimana, Rajul Pen and Daual Malkal. Young men danced ahead, leaping and running and brandishing swords, and behind thronged the crowd of worshippers, tense with excitement, the Pardhans playing fiddle and trumpets to the roar of two powerful drums. There was hut a short halt at the shrines, and then the procession pushed forward into the open fields. Two places already envisaged for the *pen-gara* were refused by the deity, who tore the *bhaktal* away each time he paused on a likely site; but the third place was favoured and the *bhaktal* stood there quivering until a spear had been thrust into the ground and the idol firmly tied to it. A little to one side two men dug a deep hole and others, going to the jungle, brought back a flat stone and laid it beside the hole; this hole symbolized the primeval cave in which the Gonds' ancestors were imprisoned, and the stone symbolized the slab with which Sri Shembu had blocked its entrance. Throughout this and all following feasts the remains of any substance that has come in touch with the idol, such as for instance water and milk used in washing the sacred objects and the remains of the sacrificial food, are thrown into this hole. In the meantime men were hurriedly bringing the wooden posts and fresh branches to build the two shelters required at the festival, and in about an hour and a half the stout posts, nine for the bigger shelter and four for the smaller, were up, roofed with horizontal beams and covered with branches of *Eugenia Jambolana*.



FIG. 43. The *bhaktal* possessed by the godhead carries the Persa Pen idol across the fields.

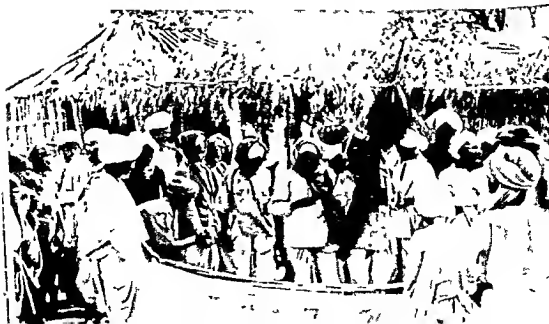
FIG. 44. Young men with swords and spears racing ahead of the Persa Pen procession.





FIG 45 The Persa Pen procession visiting the cattle pens of the village

FIG 46 The *soria* blocking the way of the Persa Pen as the procession leaves the booth.



When the sun stood high overhead—a time reserved on other days for rest in houses or the shade of trees—the men gathered at the *pen-gara*; the great semi-circle of *saga* and *soira* fanned out to worship the god with prayer and prostration. Then began the round of the village, when the Persa Pen visits the shrines of the village gods, the stalls of the village cattle, the streams and wells where the villagers draw water and the houses of the *kaṭora* and *patel*. Uprooting the idol, the *kaṭora* carried it once round the shelters, following came men with spears, swords, trumpets and drums, and behind the crowd of clansmen and *soira*. The whole procession moved to the god-shrines, where the sacred objects of the Mora Auwal, belonging to Kanaka Moti and recently brought to Marlavai, stood still in the open under a small *dondera* tree. The crowd halted and the *kaṭora* plunged the bamboo with the whisk into the earth beside the symbols of the mother-deity, a bunch of peacock feathers in a carved wooden holder. Then he sprinkled men and shrines with water and all men greeted Mora Auwal by making a deep reverence with folded hands.

A moment later a shiver convulsed the body of Kursenga Madu, the seer, and as he staggered unsteadily backwards and forwards, it became evident that once more he was possessed by the godhead. Brass anklets were hastily tied to his ankles and three rope whips with brass bells at the handles were laid across his shoulders. Crouching, twitching, painfully moving, he slowly gained the bunch of peacock feathers, grasped it between both hands. Then the drums thundered; he raised himself, and with uncertain steps danced round and round the small open space before the shrine. But this phase soon came to an end; idols and cult objects were taken up and carried in procession across the sun-baked plough-land towards the Aki Pen. Boys swinging curved swords rushed ahead of the swiftly moving crowd, a compact group some ten men abreast. The *kaṭora*, carrying the Persa Pen with its ever jingling bells, and the *bhaktal*, with the peacock feathers of Mora Auwal, swaying still under the influence of the godhead, headed the procession with arms linked, while the fiddle-playing Pardhan kept close to their side. The great heavy-headed spears, their arm-long points newly anointed with oil, flashed in the front line, and the drummers, their instruments strapped to their shoulders, made up the right wing, while young men carrying baskets full of ceremonial accessories, the *sati* stones, clay horses and other ritual objects on their heads, kept slightly behind. All wore white *dhoti*, a few men shirts and others coats of various colours, while over their turbans many had tied white or coloured scarfs, and these hung loosely on the shoulder or were tied under the chin.

Storming across the clods of the ploughed fields the procession came first to the Aki posts, where water and cooked, sweetened *dal*



were sprinkled, and the *katora* stepping up to the altar bent forward so that the bells of the Persa Pen jingled and the long black hair all but touched the post the Persa Pen greeted the village guardian. Now the procession moved on. In front went two young men intent on leading it on its prescribed pilgrimage of all the village's sacred places, sprinkling the path with newly drawn water and *dal*, cooked and sweetened with sugar. Often it seemed as though *katora* and seer were torn by the godhead in another direction, suddenly they would halt, veer round and dart off at a tangent, young men lung on their arms to stay their progress, and the spear carriers, lifting their weapons over the tops of the idols, lunged forward to point the way. Owing to these violent impulses of the godhead the procession had often to retrace its steps. On the edge of the ploughed field it turned into a narrow street flanked by cattle sheds, *dal* and water were scattered before each doorway, and the jostling crowd paused before each entrance while the *katora*, bending forward, stepped over the threshold, violently shaking the idol so that the brass bells jingled and the black hair swung from side to side. At last they came to the sacred place of Mr. hadeo where the stone figures of Hanuman and Nandi stand under the wide spreading branches of a grout banyan, and there they halted, the idol bearers in the centre and the musicians to one side, they stood for some moments in silent prayer with the crowd fanned out behind in a semi circle. Again water was sprinkled and *dal* scattered and *chauwur* and peacock feathers were lowered in salutation. By this time Madu, the seer, seemed near collapse, and often hung with his head thrown back helplessly on the arm of the *katora*, who, remaining in complete control of his senses throughout the ceremonies, was careful to keep the bells on the idol ringing.

Thus they circled the village, moving from sacred place to sacred place. Whenever the *katora* paused the blare of trumpets died, the drummers rhythm sank to a soft *vibrato* as they played on the membranes with their finger tips, and the melodious strains of the *kingri* rose above the tinkling of the sacred bells. From the Hanuman they crossed a small open space to the Nat Auwal, the Village Mother, and here the godhead possessed another of the worshippers, he fell to his knees, rolling and crawling over the ground in the path of the god. Two friends drew him to his feet, and as the idols passed, he saluted them with folded hands and was himself again. From the Auwal the procession passed down a sloping field and skirting the village, visited other cattle sheds, whose owners waited with water and offerings of boiled rice, the stream where the cattle drank, the mahua tree sacred to Bhimana the village well, and a tomb with a flag pole to

the crowd moved to the village; some followed the *kaṭora* carrying the Persa Pen to the leaf-shelters erected the previous day before the house of Kanaka Kodu, the Persa Pen's raja, but a few attached themselves to Kursenga Madu, who bore the idols of Mora Auwal to the courtyard of Kanaka Moti.

Outside Kodu's house his womenfolk awaited the coming of the Persa Pen, and when the *kaṭora* rested the base of the bamboo on a big stone the *kaṭora's* wife poured water over it, catching the drips in a silver vessel. Then she poured water over the feet of the *kaṭora*, and one by one the men in the procession came forward to have their feet washed. Meanwhile a *soira's* wife plastered a small patch in the centre of the sun-shelter with cow-dung, and there the *chauwur* was set up, its bamboo-shaft resting on a piece of *Terminalia tomentosa* bark; close to the idols the small ritual spear was driven into the ground and to either side were set up the two heavy ceremonial spears; behind stood young men with swords raised as though on guard. Out of the crowd now stepped Atram Lachu, the village-headman, who had so far remained in the background; he brought a new white cloth and with the help of a clansman held it before the idol, screening it in much the same way as at weddings the bridal couple is screened during the ceremonial washing of feet. Now it was the turn of the womenfolk to greet the Persa Pen; for days they had been busy pounding and grinding grain, and pressing oil in readiness for the great ceremonies, of which they had until now been only distant spectators. But now the courtyard and the veranda were crowded with women, grandmothers, mothers, newly married wives and quite small girls, all dressed in their best, brilliantly coloured *sari*, with sparkling silver ornaments and hair newly washed and oiled. First the *kaṭora's* wife came to the idol; she poured water from a small brass vessel over the base of the idol's bamboo and the handles of the spears, saluted each with folded hands and bent head, then kneeling down before each in turn, touched the ground with her forehead. Then came all those women married to Kanaka men, who had at some previous feast been formally presented to the Persa Pen, and after them small girls, the daughters of Kanaka men, and then married women, born of Kanaka parents; each in turn bowed down before the idol, sprinkled water with leaves dipped into a brass pot and touched the ground with the forehead.

When all the women had thus ceremonially greeted the Persa Pen, an unmarried Kanaka girl, brought five pots of water, newly drawn, and demanded payment from the *kaṭora*; she was given a few coppers. the cloth was taken away and the *kaṭora* and his assistants began to bathe the Persa Pen after the long and dusty pilgrimage round the village. One by one they poured the five pots of water over the whisk, and the women crowding round cupped their hands to catch the precious

liquid, sipping it and rubbing it on the faces of their small children or squeezing out their own dampened *sari* to preserve the liquid in small vessels to be drunk later.

When the water had been shaken out of the whisk and the drenched red cloth wrung out, a large blanket was spread before the idol and the white cloth once more held to screen the shafts. Then the women brought their offerings—brass dishes heaped with rice and millet, pulse or *chironji* kernels and a few coppers taken from the *sari* fold. Bowing down, each placed her gift on the blanket. Many mothers had brought their small children, and even two-year old toddlers put down offerings and, guided by their elders, touched the ground with their foreheads. As each woman stepped back, she saluted with reverences the men carrying the baskets with the ritual objects and the two spear-bearers.

Simultaneously an almost identical ceremony was being enacted before Kanaka Badu's house, where the sacred objects of the Auwal had been set up, here the worshippers were women born of other clans and married to Kanaka men.

As soon as all the women had deposited their offerings before the Persa Pen, the grain was tied into a white cloth and the *katora* carried the idol into the house of the Kanaka 'raja.' There a new pot, containing freshly made millet gruel, had been kept ready in the corner of the kitchen where all domestic acts of worship are performed. The *katora* dipped the ends of the whisk into the gruel and then holding it over the householder's *dhoti*, allowed the liquid to drip into the fold. As Kodu received the porridge sanctified by the touch of the *chautuur*, he bowed with folded hands and addressed the Persa Pen, with the following prayer:

Great King give me food,  
May my crops prosper,  
May good fortune be mine,  
May my grain be plentiful,  
May my house be prosperous,  
Give me good fortune.

*Maharaja nak jara sim,  
nak panta pandi tsotot  
nak barkat ai  
nak dana khub ai  
na von khub ai  
nak barkat sim*

One member from each household, either man or woman in turn held up *dhoti* or *sari*, having in like manner some millet gruel dropped into the fold, and prayed the Persa Pen for success and wealth. Returning to their houses the recipients emptied their cloths of the gruel and smeared it on all their gram and store baskets, so that after the next harvest they should be filled to the rim.

While the Gonds crowded into the narrow kitchen round the *fatora* and the idol, the Pardhan Chitru sat on the veranda playing his fiddle and singing in a soft voice.

All kinsmen gather,  
 Like flowers in blossom, all kinsmen  
 gather,  
 Wives' clans, brothers' clans gather,  
 Sisters and daughters gather.  
 Youths build the leaf shrine,  
 Girls plaster the platform,  
 All adorn the leaf-shrine.  
 Raitar, the god comes,  
 Macha Devi, the *Kaṭora's* wife is ready,  
 Four-stringed her pearl necklace,  
 Three stringed her breast chains,  
 Engraved her ring, plain her ring,  
 On her feet anklets, in her nose studs,  
 In her navel a diamond, on her fore-  
 head vermillion,

A row of pearls to mark her parting,  
 A light on a brass-plate, and a brass  
 water-jug.

Your greeting give him,  
 His greeting take,  
 Brothers' wives, five of *kaṭora* kin,  
 Brothers' wives, five of clansmen's kin,  
 Brothers' wives, five of Pardhan kin,  
 Their greeting take,  
 Your greeting give them.

When the song had ended and the *kaṭora* appeared with the idol  
 in the door, several women, married to men of six-brother clans, blocked  
 the way with a cloth and demanded their traditional dues (*ulpa* or  
*bunda*) for all the services rendered and to be rendered to the Kanaka  
 men throughout the feast. A song, sung in insistent high pitched voices,  
 emphasized their claims:

Give us our dues, oh Raitar,  
 Give us our dues, oh Raitar,  
 Your *kaṭora's* wife, climbed up the  
 shelter,  
 Pay us her fee,  
 Your clanswomen climbed up the  
 shelter  
 Pay us her fee.<sup>1</sup>

The women's plea was not ineffectual. The Kanaka men put four  
 silver rupees into the cloth, which was immediately removed. Drums  
 and trumpets sounded, and in the shade of the shelter the men began  
 to dance with short lilting steps, the *kaṭora* carrying the idol. But at

1. The reference to the climbing of the sun-shelter by the *kaṭora's* wife and another clanswoman  
 is explained as follows: according to Gond custom a woman may not climb into the attic of her house  
 or on to the shelter before it in the presence of her husband's elder brother: the singers allege that  
 the *kaṭora's* wife and a clanswoman of the Kanaka men has violated this taboo by climbing on to  
 the mandop in the presence of the Persa Pen, the "eldest brother" of the Kanaka men, and suggest  
 that the fine should be paid to them.

*Seṭ saga mire mata,*  
*poḍur poitaḥ, seṭ saga mire mata*

*aṭum kuṭum mire mater,*  
*selaṭ miaṭ mire mater.*  
*Riuy tetang mandap.*  
*ṛiang pertang bhoulā,*  
*bhoujar mandop.*  
*Pen Raitaṭ wata,*  
*Macha Devi kaṭore saure mata,*  
*Chai suṭ mohun mala,*  
*tin suṭ ganṭa mala,*  
*sika muda, waka muda,*  
*pais panjan mukit ratan,*  
*bomli hira kapaṛe ṭira,*

*bhango-bhang moting bhari kisi saure*  
*mala,*  
*Arti daṛia ani kohmandal jari*

*Niwa man urka sim,*  
*Ura man nime yeta.*  
*Seriaṭ siyung kaṭore*  
*seriaṭ siyung kuṭume,*  
*seriaṭ siyung paṭari wotak*  
*Avena man nime yeta,*  
*niwa man awenk sim.*

*Mawa ulpa sim, Raitari,*  
*mawa ulpa sim, Raitari,*  
*niwa kaṭor mandop targta,*

*tana ulpa sim;*  
*niwa kuṭume mandop targta,*

*tana ulpa sim.*

this Kanaka Manku, a Pardhan well over seventy years old and renowned for his knowledge of ritual, intervened and insisted that during this dance the *katora* should hand over the idol to his *soira*. Atram Lachu the headman of Marlavai. So the old headman carried the idol and, leading the dance, tripped round the centre post of the shelter; close behind came some fifteen other men, and circling on the outskirts a few women danced with knees and backs bent in slow waltz-like steps<sup>1</sup>

This dance lasted only for a few minutes, and then in procession, the headman still carrying the idol, all set out for the mahua tree sacred to Bhimana just outside the village. But hardly had Atram Lachu left the shelter when the way was barred by three cloths stretched across the street by men of six-brother clans (Fig 46). These demanded the customary fee (*bunda*) for the help given to their *soira*, the Kanaka men, in the performance of the Persa feast. Not until two rupees had been put into each cloth, did they allow the procession to pass on, down the path, out of the village, and past the well to a sacred mahua tree. There the idols were set up and all the ritual objects belonging to the two deities were laid on the ground. Now came some hours of rest after the strenuous exertions of the day and men and boys stretched themselves out in the shade, smoking and gossiping; in the evening food was brought from the village ready cooked, and men and boys ate heartily under the tree.

Silence soon enveloped the village, and the rising moon found people sleeping on cots and mats in front of their houses, where the night breeze brought relief after the oppressive heat of the day.

It was still dark when trumpets and drums summoned the men to accompany the Persa Pen idols to the Pedda Vagu for the ceremonial bath<sup>2</sup>. Except for the very old and infirm and the men whose wives' monthly impurity prevented them from participating, the entire male assembly joined the pilgrimage. Bullocks were yoked to carts, provisions packed up in baskets, and long before the grey of dawn threw the hills into relief the procession set out for the distant river. The *katora* and some other young men took turns in carrying the ritual objects, while alongside went the Pardhans playing their instruments till the village boundary was reached. Older men rode in carts, and were now and then kept company by those tired from the previous days exertions. Over shadowy hills, through upland valleys, they

<sup>1</sup> This dance, known as *Jama* is also danced at weddings but never during the Dandari time.

<sup>2</sup> The Pedda Vagu, as the nearest perennial stream, is the usual place for the ceremonial bath of the Persa Pen. But every few years the idols are taken on a pilgrimage to the more distant Godavari, to the 'Ganga' as the Gonds call this river and dance.

wound their way northwards. Whenever the procession approached a village, trumpets and drums heralded the Persa Pen's coming and the villagers ran out and saluted the idol.

Then at last they came to the edge of the plateau, where the land falls steeply away. Now the sun was rising. Below, outlined by the dark line of trees, lay the Pedda Vagu. They descended the steep slope and came to the banks of the river where great green pools of water lay beneath tall shady trees. Here they halted, and the *kaṭoṛa* sacrificed a black chicken to the water-spirits, calling upon them with the following words:

Water King. Fish Goddess  
Yewelag, Bodiwelag,  
Seven protectors.

*Jalbhashasur, Macha Devi,  
Yewelag, Bodiwelag,  
Sati asrang.*<sup>1</sup>

After the head of this chicken had been thrown into the water, the *kaṭoṛa* sacrificed another fowl for the Persa Pen. Then he waded into the river and dipped the sacred whisk several times into the water. All the other ritual objects were also bathed and then set up under a tree. Lastly the men bathed themselves and washed their clothes. When all these ablutions were completed, the assembly spread itself fanwise before the Persa Pen and saluted the godhead. The Pardhan played his *kingri*, singing:

Where am I going, oh brothers?  
In Chait month's heat,  
My body is burning,  
In the deep water will I bathe,  
Splashing the water, hitting the water;  
Sixty brooks become one stream,  
Sixty streams become one river,  
Sixty rivers become one ocean,  
In the ocean's water will  
I bathe.

*Bade sari nana daka baina,  
Chait masra yedi, nawa  
mendol gaj baje mata,  
pohe maiwal kasate pohe maka,  
ḍabulial kasate ḍabuling paka;  
saṭi silkana undi kurer,  
saṭi kurekna undi ganga,  
saṭi gangana undi  
samdur dariyaun ropo  
yer tunka.*

In this song the Persa Pen speaks of the wish to cool burning limbs, splashing and playing in the water. But a single stream or a single river is not enough; only in the ocean, fed by sixty great rivers, will the god bathe.<sup>2</sup>

The next rite to be performed was the sacrifice of a goat at the Auwal shrine near the village of Sungapur; for these ceremonies were taking place within the domain of this important mother-deity, and she too had to be propitiated.

So a small band of men, climbed the hill and with the usual observances sacrificed a goat. But they left only small ceremonial offerings of liver and head at the shrine and carried the rest of the meat back to

1. *Jalbhashasur* is a male water-spirit, credited with the tendency to catch men and to kill them by transforming them into water; *Machi Devi* is his wife, and *Yewelag*, *Bodiwelag* and five other *ganga mauli* (river-goddesses) are his daughters.

2. It is worth noticing that the whole song is in the singular and the Persa Pen appears as one person, even though *chaumur* and *sate* are the symbols of a female and a male deity.

the camp on the river bank. There a meal was prepared, curry of goat and chicken and quantities of millet. All through the heat of the day, the company of *saga* and *sorra* lay under the shady trees, feasting and sleeping only setting out on the return journey when the sunlight melting to gold lost its fierceness.

In Marlaui the women had busied themselves with cleaning the newly built shrines for *sati* and Mora Auwal, plastering them with mud and cow-dung but they did not approach the *pen gara* prepared the day before for the Persa Pen rites. Moreover there was more grain to husk and spices to grind for the feast of the coming night.

By nightfall the Persa Pen procession had not returned and when some three hours had passed the direction of the procession was not clear. The women were asleep and after midnight the carts jolted across the dark fields towards the group of god shrines.

There it split into two groups and while the Persa Pen idol was taken to the *pen gara* the ritual objects of the Auwal were arranged in their recently built square shrine. From now on more or less parallel ceremonies were performed at the *pen gara* and the shrine of Mora Auwal, and the worshippers fluctuated from one to the other attending in turn the essential rites at each place. Nevertheless the worship of the Persa Pen was the central interest and when the Pardhans and drummers left the *pen gara* to play at the Auwal shrine it was never for more than a few moments.

The first task after the arrival of the procession was the preparation of the altar for the sacrificial rites and the installation of the idol. In between the two leaf shelters and beside the flat stone representing the stone slab with which Sri Shembu closed the entrance to the primeval cave the idol was set up on the same place as the day before. Once more the *chauwur* was washed with water newly drawn from the well and the *katora* and the young men who had helped carry the idol had water poured over their feet. The *katora* then set up the idol close to the stone arranging beside it the spears and the basket with the *sati* stones.

ing c  
houc  
ing c  
ther

... the *katora* prostrated himself before the idol and the worshippers threw themselves to the ground. A few moments later first four and then two men late-comers, stepped from the darkness into the circle of light and shade and greeted the Persa Pen in similar fashion.

The idol installed, there was a lull in the ceremonies, many men

went to sleep on the ground, while others sat smoking and gossiping, some went to the village to fetch the provisions and the sacrificial animals, and some young boys were sent off to fetch firewood and leaves for plates.

Before the main rites began the *kaṭōra* propitiated the god by the sacrifice of a chicken provided by himself. Two men held a white cloth to shield him from the eyes of spectators, while he offered incense, placed small quantities of grain before the idols and put the chicken to peck. This chicken, known as *paltsar pori*, was sacrificed in a peculiar way; the *kaṭōra* with a wing in either hand, pressed it against a sword held edge upwards, and cut it in half; then crossing his hands he put down the right wing left and the left wing right. One half of the *paltsar pori* was later eaten by him and the other by the Pardhan.<sup>1</sup>

Presently, this sacrifice over, the *kaṭōra* took some cow-dung from a cloth brought newly from the village and freshly drawn water from a brass pot, and plastered the ground all round the idols. On this altar a new cloth was spread, and on it the *kaṭōra* poured his own offering, a few handfuls of millet-flour. Then followed all the other men, irrespective of clan and phratry, bringing offerings—some rice, some millets some flour—and handed them to the *kaṭōra* and his brother.

When the offerings had all been heaped in three great mounds before the idol, a wide spreading crescent of *saga* and *soira* curved round the Persa Pen, facing east and the smaller shelter, where the Pardhans and drummers sat. To the sound of trumpets and drums, the *kaṭōra* carried smouldering incense along the whole line of worshippers and lastly to the three Pardhans. As he passed, each man saluted the incense with folded hands. The *kaṭōra* and his brother squatted before the grain heaps, then took up handfuls of rice, and, following each other went from man to man dropping a few grains of rice into the cupped hands raised in waiting. All slightly bent their knees in salutation and then stood silent, the grain pressed between folded palms. Drums and trumpets stilled; and the *kaṭōra* from his place on the left wing of the semi-circle addressed the Persa Pen in a hardly audible voice:

See now, great lord, oh Raitar,  
Give us prosperity,  
Look on us, Raitar,  
From twelve dangers save us,  
Slay our foes, blacken their faces,  
Give us good fortune,  
Sons and daughters, families, Raitar,  
May they remain well, anointed with  
oil,  
Anointed with milk may they be;  
Give us wealth and riches,  
Give us good fortune and success,

*Sura inge maharaja Raitari,  
mak anam sim,  
makun sura nime, Raitari,  
bara wigun tari kiana,  
dandi dusman kariat todi kimi,  
Mak: yes barai sim,  
mari miar bal gopal, Raitar,  
tsokot mandana ni ustap,  
  
pal ustap mandana;  
mak dhan-daulat siana,  
yes barai arkat barkat siana,*

1. For the mythical sanction of this see p. 166.



Treat us with kindness  
In going ahead in coming behind  
Grant us your favour  
Sons and daughters they are yours  
Keep them all well

*makun tsokat uagi kiara.  
Saneke mune, uaneke paja,  
pahti mandana  
Mari mior niur andir,  
tsokat mandana*

Of a sudden drums and trumpets roared; all prostrated themselves, lying face downwards on the dry earth for a few minutes; then they rose. The rice grains were collected from each man by the *katora* and his brother, taken to the altar and mingled with the rest of the offerings, then once more grain was distributed and the whole worship with prayer and prostration was repeated in exactly the same form.<sup>1</sup>

The drums and the trumpets whose music had underlined most of the important phases in the rites were now silent, and Kanaka Chitru the principal Pardhan began to sing, accompanying himself with the soft tune of his fiddle and the low jingling of the bells from the crest of his curved bow. All stood in reverent silence as the sacred song rang through the night.

Flowers bursting into blossom  
All kinsmen gather together,  
Maternal kinsmen come together,  
Paternal kinsmen come together,  
Sisters daughters come together,  
Their greetings take,  
Your greeting give them,  
Spurred cocks  
Accept as food  
Horned goats  
Accept as food,  
A calf of two years,  
Accept as food

*Podur postap,  
ser saga mire mata,  
soira dhairai mire mater,  
otum kutum mire mater,  
selar muar mire matang  
Ura man nime yeta,  
nisa man urk sim,  
atelkiatang gogring,  
bojun nime yeta,  
kohklatang bakrana  
bayun nime yeta,  
sungras padana  
bojun yeta*

The Pardhan's song lasted three or four minutes, and then the music of squeaking trumpets and thundering drums resumed. The interest of the assembled crowd turned now to the shrine of Mora Auwal, where chickens and goats destined for sacrifice were subjected to the usual tests preceding the slaughter. While the women may not participate in the central rites of the Persa Pen nor even approach the *pengara*, they take an active part in the worship of Mora Auwal and the *sati*, and their songs accompanied all the preparatory rites at the Auwal shrine. When the slaughter of the animals began, the women were the only spectators, for

Then on the ' . . . . . *katora*  
traced a design of powdered turmeric, mullet flour and vermilion, letting the powder run through his fingers as he drew the lines with swift sure sweeps five squares of turmeric powder side by side, and before them

<sup>1</sup> The Gonds consider this repetition of the worship as an unalterable traditional practice as my Gond informants explained, the act must be performed "in a pair

two sets of small heaps of rice, five in a row and a sixth in front.<sup>1</sup> All the men who had provided chickens for sacrifice now brought them to the *kaṭora* to be anointed with oil and turmeric, and then set them, one by one, before the grain heaps. If a chicken peeks the grain it is a sign that its sacrifice will be accepted by the godhead, but its refusal to eat signifies the refusal of the deity to accept the offering. As each man put his chicken to the test he murmured a prayer similar in content to the communal prayer spoken by the *kaṭora* (cf. p. 271). Most fowls—and some were small chickens only a few days old—readily picked up the grain, but some hesitated and then a bamboo torch was held close to the head so that in its light the fowl might more readily eat, while the owner muttered prayers begging the deity to accept the offering. The greatest difficulty was created by the patel Atram Lachu's chicken; frightened by the noise it steadily refused to eat, and for nearly half an hour the proceedings were held up as the old man tried to coax the chicken into pecking and recited long prayers to placate the offended deity. At last he had to send to the village for a larger chicken and this proved luckily less difficult and quickly began to eat.

Next three goats were brought and stood before the idols, men holding their hind-legs; the *kaṭora* first anointed their foreheads and then sprinkled them with water. Their behaviour too was closely watched, for the goats must shake their whole body before they are considered acceptable to the deity. One goat shook itself as soon as the cold water touched its head and back, but the others remained obdurate, staring and baaing piteously; low voiced prayers called on the godhead to accept the sacrifice but the men had to aid the deity in the expression of his

1. The number of rice or millet-heaps in a row corresponds here, as at all rites, to that of the clan's *wen*; the men of a six *wen* clan, for instance, make at every *puja* six heaps in a row and a seventh in front. The single heap is in honour of Kalipursur, the father of Bhart Raja; the name Kalipursur (or Kalipursal) means literally 'man of this world,' i.e., of the present era, the Kaliyug, and there is reason to believe that although sometimes referred to as Kalipursur Pen he is not a god but a legendary First Man. He helped Pahandi Kupar Lingal in his search for the Gand gods (cf. p. 110) and also in the establishment of the Persa Pen cult. A *gumela* song recounts how Kalipursur instructed Lingal to give him a share in every *puja*:—

Lingal began to question Kalipursur:  
 "The Gand gods, where may they be, oh tell me?"  
 So he questioned Kalipursur,  
 "The era of man is to come,  
 "What Lingal then will you give me?"  
 "Four kin-groups will perform *puja*," he said.  
 Before every *puja*, your *puja* they will perform,  
 The *puja* for Pursur of this world,"  
 Lingal began to worship Pursur.  
 "Listen, Lingal, to you I will tell,  
 To the west and the east,  
 To the left and the right,  
 You go and return," thus spake Pursur,  
 "Then I will tell you the place (of your gods).  
 oh Lingal,"  
 Lingal started and left.

*Kalipursur nende Lingal inda bare latore,  
 Koya putpenkna jara nak nime wehare.*

*Kalipursur nende inda bare latore,  
 Narput Kali nende ayar Lingara.  
 Nak nime batal bare siki Lingara,  
 Nalung sagang pujang arantung intor,  
 Puja namune nende niwa puja iranir.*

*Kalitor Kali nende Pursuna puja,  
 Lingal man Purusan sio lende lator.  
 Kenja nawi Lingara nikun wehmar.  
 Siraing mula, Poraing mula,  
 Dema nende mula, tina nende mula.  
 Sanji nime wara indana Purusal,  
 Tan paja jara nik wehmar, Lingal.*

*Lingal chalemata nende, lator Lingal*



and sacrificed it in front of his fiddle which according to a myth is the transformed body of his ancestress Hirabai (cf. p. 121).

Dragged to one side, the bodies of the slain animals were now skinned and cut up and the meat handed over to men of six-brother clans, who, as *soira* of the Kanaka men, have the task of preparing the food for the feast. Of this food no woman may eat. The rites at the *pen-gara* over, all moved to the shrine already prepared to house the *sati*, the nine stones representing ancestors. These stones which, throughout the rites, had rested in a basket by the side of the Persa Pen, were now installed in a line on a raised platform occupying the centre of the shrine, and smeared with fresh red paint. While the *kaṭōra* made the usual preparations for the sacrifice, the women came singing down the path from the village and soon surrounded the shrine; closely they pressed round it, singing a commentary on the ritual acts in progress and begging the deity to accept their offerings; lines like the following recurred twenty or more times:

Lachu, Somu's son, the priest,  
He is the priest,  
Smoke rises from the incense-vessel,  
He gives the offering,  
Holding a chicken, making flour-heaps,  
Spurred cocks,  
Horned goats,  
Accept as offerings,

*Lachu Sombal kaṭōra,  
kaṭōra ya-le,  
maṛkanj dupna bhamkara,  
siana ya-le,  
chipyal kor muṭṭite puja,  
arekwatang gogring,  
kohkwatang bakrana  
bhojun nime yeta.*

At last the chicken and the goat which had already been consecrated before the Persa Pen were brought to the *sati* shrine and there beheaded in the same manner as those at the *pen-gara*. This ended the main sacrificial rites. It was long past midnight. The women's song faded, Pardhan Chitru tied up his *kingri* and the musicians, Gond and Pardhan alike, laid aside their instruments. All over the field fires sprang into flame, the centres of small groups of men who chatted and smoked while they waited for the feast to be ready. Close to the *pen-gara* men prepared the food, but there was little art in their cooking: once the animals had been hacked up into small pieces without much distinction as to meat, intestines and bone, and put into huge brass cauldrons with oil, salt, chillies, spices and a great deal of water, there was little to do but to stir the ingredients with long handled ladles and watch the steam rise in clouds from the cooking pots. The meat of the animals killed before the *sati* shrine was, though also cooked by men, prepared separately near the *sati* shrine; and this food was eaten by the women, who may not partake of the animals killed at the *pen-gara*. The grain to be offered to the Persa Pen was also cooked separately in a special pot, and so were some livers. When this sacrificial food (*niwot*) was ready, a cloth was stretched over poles in such a way as to screen off three sides of a small space before the altar. There the *kaṭōra* and the men of Kanaka clan, the members of the raja-house excepted, sat down to a ceremonial

meal. Water was brought in a brass-pot and all washed their hands, then incense was handed round, and in silence the *katora* offered some of the food a little rice and liver, to the Persa Pen, placing it on five *mura*-leaves before the idols. Then he took a few morsels of the sacrificial food and threw them aside for the Departed, praying for their blessing.

See Departed, may this reach you  
Grant us your favour

*Suga satar notur mik yeri  
pahtu man.*

Behind the screen the Kanaka men sat down to eat of the sacrificial food, and when they had finished, small quantities of the same food were served first to the other people of the five-*wen* phratry, and to the Pardhans, who ate separately near the small shelter; then to their *soira*, the six-brother people, after them to the seven-brother people and at last to the four-brother people. But this ceremonial meal was only an appetiser for the coming feast, when the diners devoured enormous quantities of meat and millet without any distinction of clan or phratry.

Dawn was creeping over the hills while leaf-platters were still heaped with fourth or fifth helpings. The Pardhans, faithful to their duty, once more blew their trumpets, signifying that the approaching day had found the feast in full swing. But before it was fully light most of the men had silently sneaked off to a comfortable bed in the village. Only a few dozing Kanaka men and the Pardhans guarded their Persa Pen, still standing erect on the scene of the previous night's rites.

So great was the general exhaustion that the sun had long passed the zenith before the men again assembled before the sacred objects. For the last time the *katora* burnt incense and carried the idol, dancing, round the circle of worshippers, he handed it in succession to several men who each carried it, dancing, for a few moments.

Now the end of the ceremonies was at hand and the *katora* began the last rites, young men picked up the sacred spears and baskets and the idol  
 . . . . . offered ob-  
 . . . . . and one  
 . . . . . the idol  
 . . . . . *tora* and  
 men prostrated themselves at the *katora*'s feet. Last came the Pardhans, who substituted a deep reverence for the embrace. Then the idol was

carried in a brass pot, while the *sale*, the iron spear-point, was secured in a

wooden sheath. To the sound of rolling drums the pot with the ritual objects was carried into the newly built *sati* shrine and placed in the fork of the three-pronged post. Then the *kaṭoṛa* and a group of other Kanaka men carried the *sale* in solemn procession to a nearby mahua tree and after making many reverences, placed it in the fork of a branch. In doing this they sang in unison:

At the god's shrine, at the feast-place  
Raitar,

Clansmen and brothers gather,  
Wives' kinsmen gather,  
All kinsmen gather, Raitar,  
Your greeting give them, Raitar,  
Their greeting take you, Raitar,  
A golden nest is your house, Raitar,  
Going ahead, coming behind,  
May all our works succeed, Raitar.  
Sons, daughters may remain well,

Raitar,  
All kinsmen, all relations, in twelve  
moons' time,  
Your feast we will celebrate, Raitar.

*Pen-gara warawa gara ropo, Raitar,*

*aṭum kuṭum mire mater, Raitar,  
soira darial mire mater,  
seṛ saga mire mater, Raitari  
niwa man uka sim, Raitari  
ura man nime ṛeta Raitari,  
soneta gumpa niwa ron Raitari,  
Soneke munc, waneke paja,  
balobal phate kam aiana Raitari,  
Mari miar sukne mandana Raitari*

*ser saga soira darial.*

*aṭum kuṭum, bara mahinang  
niwa tij puja tungantom, Raitari.*

The 'golden nest' (*soneta gumpa*) of the song refers to the hollow log laid crutch-like across the branches of the mahua tree in which the *sale* is deposited. But here the disposal of the *sale* within sight of the *pen-gara* was purely ceremonial, and no provision for the 'golden nest' was made. The Marlavai men said that later the *kaṭoṛa* accompanied only by one trusted man would hide the *sale* elsewhere so that it could not be stolen by clansmen from other villages.

The sun stood low when the ceremonies ended, but men and women assembled once more at the feast-place and the *sati* shrine, where they cooked and ate the meat and millet remaining from the previous night. In the dark they filed back to the village.

Custom prescribed—ignoring human frailty—that the night after the Persa Pen feast should be spent in listening to sacred songs, and the Pardhans, as the guardians of tradition, followed the old established procedure. They installed themselves under the leaf shelter in front of the Kanaka raja's house, the old man sitting in the centre of a mat, singing and playing his fiddle, and his son and nephew squatted on either side, joining in the refrain that followed each verse. Round about lolled the young men, rolled in their cloths, or resting on one arm, smoking leaf-pipes and listening to the old, old epic of the birth of the Gond gods and their imprisonment in the primeval cave by Sri Shembu.

The performance of the epic was in traditional form: instrumental passages alternating with vocal, singing with declamation.

1. Later I discovered that the men's fear of losing the *sale* again had led them to defy all custom and keep it not in a mahua tree but in the house of Kanaka Kodu, the god's 'raja.' This, however, had unfortunate consequences, for a traveller of Kunbi caste defiled the house by taking his sandals inside, and so an expensive rite had to be performed in order to appease the angered deity.

After tuning his three stringed fiddle, Chitru began with a short prelude, the tiny bells on the bow of antelope horn and horse hair softly jingling as he played. Looking up, he then sung in a loud voice, and with numerous repetitions of each phrase, his formal greeting and preamble which had no direct bearing on the following tale. He then passed over to the epic itself and after the first three or four verses his two assistants joined in, singing to the end of the strophe *unisono* with Chitru, who between the phrases raised his voice several times to a loud *Heh* and accompanied it with a forceful stroke of the bow, while his son marked the rhythm with a small pair of cymbals.

Then lowering the fiddle and emphasizing his declamation with vivid gestures of hands and bow, Chitru spoke in a loud and excited voice some twenty five sentences, in these he repeated what he had already sung and it is mainly these spoken words which allow the audience to follow the narrative.

This recitation he followed up by about half a minute of play on the fiddle, and then all three began to sing again *unisono*, ending each verse with a long drawn out *a a a ah!* During this trio Chitru played the fiddle considerably louder and in a much more vigorous manner than he had done when accompanying his solo.<sup>1</sup>

There was a moment's pause, and then he began the prelude introducing the next sequence of *recitativo*, declamation and song.

Chitru did not start at the beginning of the epic, for at no Persa Pen feast is it possible to go through the entire mythical cycle, and so Pardhans recite a selection of episodes, varying their choice from year to year.

After a few strophes Chitru came to the important episode of the birth of the Parenda Khara Koya Was Penk, the divine ancestors of the Gond race, and sung of Kalikankali's, their mother's, plight, in the inhospitable wilderness of the forest Waibogam.

As in Waibogam forest she wandered  
The girl's nine months were full  
Wherever she looked there was forest,  
Then her birth pains began<sup>2</sup>  
And before her lay the age of men<sup>3</sup>

All her courage left her, the girl sat  
down  
Then what sprang up before her?  
A *dondera* tree sprang up in front,  
To lean against a *mard* tree sprang up

*Sonda gatha Waibogam kera  
nau gatkang baiena nintang  
Bekr surteke kera manta  
Viata gatha bai tuklate gaigute manta  
maina gatha tenk muneta kaliyagan  
aiar,  
Tenk himat silua, uta bai*

*uta paja mune ata batate paida?  
Dandera mara mune paidas ata  
ata paja tekunk mard marata paidas  
ata,*

1 The dividing of the traditional text, which is a running narrative into strophes, first sung and then declaimed and once more elaborated in singing is purely arbitrary and spontaneous.

2 *Gaigute* is a Marathi expression meaning literally "a cow stuck in the mud" here a woman in labour is compared to a cow in this helpless position.

3 The idea is that only with the birth of the Parenda Khara Koya Was Penk the ancestors of the Gonds, Kaliyog, the present era, began.

To the right a *kursi* tree sprang up,  
To the left a *lim* tree sprang up,  
In the world to come all these would  
be useful to gods.

Then the girl felt the birth pangs,  
It was the birth of the gods:  
Twelve threshing-floors of Gond gods  
were born,  
Thirty-three threshing-floors of Telugu  
gods were born,  
Thirty-two threshing-floors of Maratha  
gods were born,  
Then rose Kalikankali,  
And the gods, like tiny mice, began to  
whimper and whine,  
Them she forsook.

Kalikankali felt gnawing hunger and  
said:

"Where shall I find food, where shall  
I go?

"Once more I'll return to grand-  
father."

Arrived, she said: "Grandfather  
hunger gnaws at my stomach,  
"Only today give me something to  
eat."

"Do not look on my face,  
"Go, and hide your face."

"Without food, my life flies."

What then? Fire from the brazier he  
took,

"Open your mouth," he said,  
She did so and into her mouth he  
pushed fire,  
And at once she burnt to ashes.

On Mount Merugiri, on nine-walled  
Dhauragiri,

Sri Shembu Mahadeo (spoke):

"Through my world I will journey,  
"Through valley after valley I'll  
journey."

Ready he made the white bull Nandi;  
"Travelling, I'll see my world."

Girjal Parvati said: "I'll come too."

"Womenfolk should not journey,  
"But headstrong are women and  
children!"

Near Nandi's head sat god Shembu  
Near Nandi's tail sat Girjal Parvati,  
So they set out for the world.  
Through valleys and valleys

*baglatk kursi marata paidas ata,  
tina baju lim marata paidas ata,  
ata mune kaliyogun aiar, penkun id  
kam waiar,  
Aian gafka bai tsiklate gaigute mata,  
penkena paidas atas  
Parenda Khara Koya Wasi Penk pai-  
das atang,  
Telangi penk, tetis khara Telinga  
penkena paidas atang  
batis khara kos Maratha penkena pai-  
das atang  
ata paja Kalikankali teta,  
teta paja yeli suspen dat penk rewen-  
junge penk mentang.  
awen sufi kita.*

*Tan paja Kalikankalina petit ropo  
manta arta,  
indeke бага tinlek nak puṭar бага  
daka?  
Unde tsauta tado naga daka.*

*Sonji; tado, inta, na petit ropo  
manta arta,  
nend nak tinle sim.*

*Nawa toḍi surṃa,  
niwa toḍi diṣweki soni.  
An wiṃ parau danta.  
Aske batal kiana ḍobrate tarṃi pimar*

*ḍakne toḍi kim,  
ḍakne kita paja toṛ daga waḍiantor,  
waḍit paja kabang weshi khak anta.*

*Merugiri parbat naukoṭ Dhauragiri,*

*Sri Shembu Mahadeval,  
nawa duniya kali welika,  
wopang wopang kali welika,*

*Dhaural Nandi sauri kintor;  
duniya nawa welise surka.  
Girjal Parvatal; Nana unde waka.  
weilona jati waimay sile,  
asturi haṭ balhaṭ!*

*Tala Nandi Shembu Deval utor,  
tokor Nandi Girjal Parvatal uta,  
duniyat ropo pesitang.  
Wopang wopang kali*



Through rain clouds and rain clouds  
 they journeyed,  
 Through the north and the Mogul  
 land,  
 Through the south and east they jour-  
 neyed and roamed  
 Husband dear I want to pass  
 Halt the Nandi a little"  
 The goddess dismounted, then came  
 the nose of those gods  
 The lizard like gods were whining,  
 The goddess heard the sound  
 Here I'll sit down to pass"  
 Then said god Shembu  
 'There sit oh queen"  
 Near a man how shall I sit?"  
 Hearing their crying,  
 She went to the gods,  
 Whining and whimpering the gods  
 were crying  
 I'll take these gods with me!  
 In the fold of her golden cloth,  
 She gathered the gods  
 Then again mounted the Nandi,  
 Go on husband let us go to the  
 village  
 Then (she thought) What shall I do  
 with these gods?  
 The Dirmasur Gond gods she suckled  
 With the milk of her right breast,  
 The Telugu and Maratha gods she fed  
 with her left breast  
 From the suckling her right breast  
 shrivelled  
 But her left breast stood firm and  
 sound,  
 Well and sound was her left breast  
 God Shembu saw this (and thought)  
 Why has my queen got so thin?"  
 Then (said) "Those rascally gods,  
 you are suckling!"  
 "A solid meal will I provide for those  
 gods!"  
 Then god Shembu prepared a meal,  
 For the Gond god boiled rice,  
 Curries of beans and lentils, butter,  
 And tamarinds he prepared,  
 Such food he cooked for the Gond  
 gods  
 For the Telugu and Maratha gods,  
 He made curry of dal and boiled  
 maize

*payang payang kali ueluseke ueluseke  
 daster,  
 utar kan Magulayi kon dakin kon,*

*panchan kon uelineke soneke soneke.*

*Saibalala nak uatuni uata,  
 jarasa Nandi nilusa  
 Bai teita te te penkena tsapur uaseke  
 manta,  
 seuen dalen dat penk arantang,  
 seuen doken dhat penk arantang,  
 ige uatuni utka,  
 Shembu Deral intor,  
 Agan uda rani  
 Marsan karum badrang udla?  
 Te uena bahan bahan tsapur uanta,  
 penk naga sola,  
 penk usor boior penk arantang,*

*penkun nana uola?  
 Ade soneta patau sru naga,  
 penk utpia pita, jasi uata,  
 tsauta ital paja Nandi uta  
 Uta paja, dang saiba, natneka dakt,*

*uata paja penk unde badrang tunla?*

*Dirmasur Koya penkun pal wuhanta,  
 tina jobun pal wuhanta Kaya uasi  
 penkun,  
 Telanga penkun kas Maratha penkun  
 dema jobun wuhanta,  
 Wuhteke tina jobun watanta*

*dema jobun tsila tsila korstap manta,*

*asi dardar manta dema jobun  
 Maneka Shembu Dwal surneke,  
 bari naxa rani sufurkne ata?  
 ata paja, hatrande penkunk wuhanti*

*aske penkunk nana marla paranjani  
 doska*

*aske Shembu deval paranjani tungior  
 Koya uasi Penkunk uani gato  
 dari kusri, peselkna kusri, pal ni  
 uta pandi jexun paranjani tungior  
 Koya uasi penkun tungneke*

*Telanga penkun Kas Maratha penkun,  
 arenkun jata kusri matena gato  
 tungior*

Then told the gods:  
 "Go to the sea and bathe."

Off went the gods and swam,  
 After the bath they came back,  
 Food he served to the Gond gods,  
 Heaped the food and curry on leaf-plates,

Served tamarinds to the gods,  
 Then to the Telugu gods and  
 To the Maratha gods,  
*Dal* curry and maize he served.

Waiting and looking the Gond gods  
 (said:)

"All this, god Shembu has done very well,

"But now some liquor is needed!"

God Shembu listened,  
 And having heard them, created liquor,

Then he made strong liquor,

Strong and weaker liquor he set before them,

Leaf-cups he served to the gods.  
 Their fingers they wetted in liquor<sup>1</sup>.

"*Ram, Ram*, we drink this."

Strong and weak liquor they drank,  
 Drunk they got, see! quite drunk they got, (and said:)

"But there is no meat!"

This Shembu heard also.

Then what did he do? Dirt from his thigh he rubbed off,

What did he make with this?

He made a squirrel, and then

Gave it life-water to drink and on it poured life-water,

It came alive.

Then over its back he drew three lines,

And let it out near the gods.

*Tata, tata*, it ran

The gods saw it running,

"Here is meat!", and *tata tata*, they left their food,

And chased after; *tirk* squeaking it ran,

Behind ran the gods,

Into the cave Sursur jumped the squirrel,

*Awen paja penkun itor;*  
*Sonṭ saṭi samdur dariyannē yer*  
*tunglēn sonṭ.*

*penk sonji nahe matang,*  
*Penk yer tungsī watang.*  
*Jewun Koya Wasi penkun tungtor,*  
*kuṛi naga jewun ḍopone kusri sitor.*

*pulsu penkun waḍi kitor,*  
*tan ropo Telinga penkunk*  
*kos Maratha penkunk,*  
*jata kusri make gaṭo waḍi kitor.*  
*nehena suṛtang, Koya Wasi Penk suṛ-*  
*tang;*

*id samdo Shembu deval tsokoṭ tung-*  
*tor*

*bati ingc nisha jing aiana!*  
*Aske Shembu deval kenjtor,*  
*kenji paja Shembu deval maiate kalda*  
*paidas kitor,*  
*ingc ade gaṭkat ropo kandi kal paidas*  
*kitor,*

*kandi kapur kal, phul kal penkunk*  
*mune irtor,*  
*aske penk jamwatane waḍitor,*  
*Tina botate widurkter,*  
*Ram Ram, momot yetantom.*  
*kandi kapur kal penk unṭang,*  
*uṭa paja jing wata, heteri, tsokoṭ jing*  
*wata.*

*bati shak sile.*  
*Sile aske Shembu kenjtor.*  
*Batal kitorte? ade mandita mach*  
*tendtor,*

*Tendsi batal tungtor?*  
*Wartse tunktor, tungta paja*  
*betatsi betkaṭi amrutna waṭi tan poro*  
*waṭtor,*

*jiwa tank wata.*  
*wat paja tana ḍhenki poro mund rek-*  
*ṭang umtor,*  
*umt paja penk naga suṭi kitor.*

*Tata tata witanta,*  
*wita paja penk suṛtang,*  
*shak puṭta, tata tata gaṭo suṭi kitang,*

*tan paja witantang, tirk inta*

*tan paja penk witantang,*  
*Sursuryadit ropo deianta wartse,*

1. This refers to the custom before drinking liquor of dipping the forefinger into the liquor and dropping a little on the ground for the souls of the Departed.

All the gods too jumped into the cave,

Behind the twelve threshing floors of  
Gond gods

Came Sri Shembu Mahadeo

Die you rascals

For twelve years stay in this cave!

Then what did he do?

A stone as big as twelve bullocks he  
put over (the cave)

And over it planted a palm tree

There to remain for twelve years

On guard in a high banyan tree with  
wide spreading branches

As watchman he set a Renuwal bird

Then god Shembu (gave) the food  
cooked with butter

To the Maratha and Telugu gods and  
said "Eat eat you the meal!"

When after twelve years the Gond  
gods are found

Dal curry and maize, served on teak  
leaves shall be their food"

The Pardhans' singing was suddenly interrupted by the announcement that the meal was ready. Leaf-platters were distributed and groups formed in the moon lit squares and in the deep shadows of the house-eaves.

After the meal there was an abortive attempt of Pardhans and drummers to induce the men to dance. Trumpets spluttered and drums, beaten by tired hands, marked a lame rhythm. It was not inspiring, and the young men were in agreement in preferring their beds to the dance floor.

Next morning all but the women, who had to fetch water from the well and prepare food, slept well into the day, but at noon, after a meal of millet and *dal*, the Pardhans resumed their singing in front of Kanaka Kodu's house and the opening stanzas of old Chitru's song quickly drew a large audience. The shelter no longer threw deep shade, for the fierce sun had shrivelled the leaves, and the sunlight, streaming through, chequered the ground with light. Young men and young boys squatted in small groups in the open, but older men sat on mats or cots in the cool of verandas or in the shadow of overhanging eaves, while here and there small groups of women leant against house walls. All listened eagerly to the stories of their mythical ancestors.

In the night

1

2

3

1. In the night, her eyes resting on the singers

*dest paja samdi pink jadit rajo desan  
tang*

*Parenda khara hoja Was penkun  
pajai*

*Sri Shembu Mahadeo sotor,*

*Samt nua maicha*

*jadit raba bara warsang mant*

*Batal kintor?*

*Parenda Hondana kharai atsor banda  
poro waitantor,*

*ualla paja undi tari mara aga ursan  
tor,*

*bara warsang manmat*

*Iuen rakuals sirg sola siruli mara jap  
aria biruli mara*

*aen rakuals nend Renuwal pite  
wior*

*Tan paja Shembu devol id kusri gato,  
id pal ni gato*

*hos Maratha penk Telinga penk unt,  
jeuun tins!*

*Bara warsang hoja Was penk put  
teke,*

*jala kusri makai gajo teka akrise  
jeurun aiana*



FIG. 47. The Kannaka Pardhans singing the sacred myths under a sun-shelter.



FIG 49 Saluting  
the Persa Pen  
before the idol is  
dismantled



vorsj ppuns,  
Anwal' laru g tl  
I er a i en fed t

Chitru's song had progressed; he had come to the liberation of the Gond gods by the culture-hero Pahandi Kupaṅg Lingal and the goddess Jangu Bai, who helped him to overcome the giant birds posted by Sri Shembu Mahadeo as guardians of the cave.<sup>1</sup>

"To free the gods you have come, oh brother," said Jangu Bai,  
"But the birds are fierce and strong,  
Man-eaters are the birds."

"What shall we do then, sister?"  
"I'll tell you how to overcome them!  
Gather the resin of trees,"

The resin of trees he gathered,  
Put it into a cauldron,  
Raised the cauldron on stones,  
And below made fire,  
Then the resin melted.  
Now she lifted the cauldron on to his head.

Thus carrying the cauldron,  
Lingal took it to the nestlings,  
But could not climb up: "My hands  
don't reach the branches!"

What said Jangu Bai?  
"I will stand by the trunk,  
You climb up on my back," she said,

Up her back he climbed,  
Then stood on her shoulders;  
The cauldron he took to the nestlings,

Then poured the resin into their mouths,

Dying, the nestlings screamed and shouted.

Mother and father heard them,  
The Renisurval birds heard.

"Our children are in trouble,  
They are screaming! Let us go!"

The Renisurval birds were coming,  
Brr, they came with great force.

"The Renisurval, oh, oh, oh, they are coming, sister."

Fear gripped Pahandi Kupaṅg Lingal,  
He trembled and shook with fear,  
Forgot to climb down by her back,  
Gripping her breasts he climbed down in front.

"Fool of a brother, to climb up behind,

*Penkun tendenēn wati dada, Jangu Bai ita,*

*pitēng mantang bai nadan,*

*pitēng tinwalir andung.*

*Bahan kikaṅ bai?*

*Tana hikmat wehanton tunga,*

*mara meṭata sewer jama kim.*

*Jama kitor sewer,*

*kaṅcitaga waṭtor,*

*kareṅ maudi kitor*

*aga kai dostor tarmi pota,*

*potate inge sewer gare mata,*

*Inge talat poro kareṅ pia,*

*talat poro tostor Lingal,*

*porik naga wontor,*

*woneke targa waio, nawang kaik*

*yewong,*

*Jangu Bai batal inta?*

*Moṅ naga nilanta,*

*nilta paja pajatk targa inta,*

*pajatk targantor,*

*pajatk targsi seṭa naga nilantor;*

*poriknaga kareṅ wontor,*

*inge porikna toṅ daga sewer weditor,*

*porikna paran soneke hankat patang*

*anwal babo kenja sota,*

*Rensurvali biṅēng kenjtang,*

*ma porikunk gira wata,*

*haka sintang, daita!*

*Renisurvalik pitēng waseke mantang,*

*maneke bararara mota pisi wantang*

*Renisurval, ohahaha, wantang bai!*

*Ghabre masi, Pahandi Kupaṅg Lingal*

*kharpeṅ mator, dhandare mator,*

*paja reiwal sut kitor,*

*munetk jobun piseke reitor,*

*aske hat dada, soneke peretk*

1. The reader will notice that the following version of this episode differs considerably from the version contained in the *Myth of Jangu Bai* recorded in Chapter IV. Both texts have been reproduced in order to illustrate the variations in the treatment of a basic mythical theme by Pardhans of different clan.

And come down in front!  
 "Descending you gripped my breasts,  
 How are you now a brother?  
 How am I now a sister?  
 Then she abused him

Incest you have committed  
 You remain in your place  
 I'll remain in my place  
 The Rensural birds were coming  
 Pahandi Kupa Lingal grasped  
 Gegara the battle axe to smite the  
 birds

The birds said Do not kill us  
 Grant us our lives  
 In future ages omen birds we will  
 be

Then he took them in his hand and  
 let them go

Released small birds they became  
 Now they are in this world  
 They are the *tauwe* birds

Then the music of silken strings  
 Sixteen tunes eighteen melodies,  
 Pahandi Kupa Lingal played  
 Then the gods in the cave rejoiced  
 Brothers the one to free us has come!  
 You strike brother!

I'll strike brother!  
 The seven brothers struck, the cave  
 did not open

The six brothers struck the cave did  
 not open

The four brothers struck the cave did  
 not open

The five brothers struck then opened  
 the cave.

The cave opened out came the five  
 brothers,

Step by step came the six brothers  
 Cat like climbed out the seven brothers,  
 Controllers of all works the four  
 brothers came.

The gods came out, from the cave  
 they came out,

Pahandi Kupa Lingal led them,  
 Along the road to Dhanegaon

*uauke munell'  
 reneke jobun jui jetti,  
 nime dadani бага?  
 nana selaya bagna?  
 aske sapena sila  
 karpasur arusti,  
 nua jagate nime man,  
 naua jagate nana mandanton,  
 Rensural puteng wantang,  
 Pahandi Kupa Lingal gegara  
 persu pianur pitenun pailen*

*puteng itang maula jnran jelma  
 makun jua dan sut kim  
 mune kahyogun topo sagur piten,  
 momot nuje malam  
 Aske mutimen pitat, paja pheks kitar,*

*sutr kitor chudur pifeng  
 injele kahitropa manting  
 tauwe fite an mantang  
 Aske dan losa warida uaja  
 sora dermsang atra uajang pater,  
 Pahandi Kupa Lingal pitor  
 aske penk yadit topo kushi atang  
 Dnda mah calai pultor,  
 nime pam dada!  
 nna pam dada!  
 Tamun yetwir pater, yadi uarta nle*

*tamun saruir pater, yadi uarta nle*

*tamun nalair pater, yadi uarta nle*

*tamun saur pater, yndi uarta*

*Tadi patang pentang tamun saur,*

*sarp jastang tamun saruir  
 uerkar uendtang tamun yetwir,  
 tusmar tustet tamun nalair*

*penk pentang yadital pentang*

*Pahandi Kupa Lingal jui danlor  
 Dhanegaona sari*

With short interruptions the Pardhans continued their singing throughout the heat of the afternoon, till about an hour before sunset. When they had sung of the Gonds' arrival in Dhanegaon and the institution of the Persa Pen cult by Pahandi Kupa Lingal, they began the myth of Manko, but did not get further than her marriage to Dundria Raur. At the next feast, in the month of Pus, they explained, they



FIG. 50. The ritual hiding of the *salc* in a mahua tree after the Persa Pen feast





110 51 Women plastering the *sati* shrine at Kesapur during the rites in Pus

11 5 The sacred *kank* post at Varnur



would start at once with the Manko myth, and sing it up to the end.<sup>1</sup>

In the evening another feast awaited the people of Marlavai and their guests. It was the turn of the six-brother people to provide a meal with the money received from the Kanaka men, and another goat was slaughtered, this time without any ceremony. Most people slept while some young men busied themselves over the cooking pots stirring the boiling millet with long handled ladles.

When the food was ready, the hosts went from house to house waking the sleepy inmates, but some time elapsed before groups of diners formed in the squares and leaf-platters were heaped with millet and goat curry.

After the meal the Pardhans and drummers began once more playing beside the *mandop* and the younger men danced the *demsa* under the shelter, moving with small tripping steps anti-clockwise round the centre post, all in a band, but without touching one another. Some had tied bell anklets to their feet and as they warmed to the rhythm, and individual dancers whirled on their own axis, they uttered hoarse shouts. After some time women too joined the dance, circling and revolving, with bent backs and knees on the outskirts of the male dancers. But the dance did not last much past midnight; all were tired and even the young men fell asleep; only a short flourish of drums at dawn maintained the fiction that 'the whole night had been spent in playing and dancing.' Everyone slept till far into the morning.

The Persa Pen feast had come to an end, and all that remained to be done next day was to pay the three Pardhans for their services: four rupees and a few *seer* of millet, was the reward they received from the Kanaka men after some short and friendly bargaining. Chitru, though not ill satisfied with the sum, explained that it was modest compared with the gifts of cattle and cloth which of old Pardhans received on such occasions from their then prosperous Gond patrons.

### *The Persa Pen rites at Dassera and at the Full Moon of Pus.*

The great festival in the month of Bhawe is for all clans the most important of the rites in honour of the Persa Pen, and for some clans it is the only time in the year when it is customary to take the sacred objects from their receptacles and to expose them to the eyes of the worshippers. Many clans, however, perform ceremonies similar in character, though generally on a somewhat smaller scale at Dassera and at the full moon of Pus. From Bhawe, in the middle of the hot weather, and throughout the rains, the symbols of the Persa Pen remain in the

1. In Pus I was not present, but next Bhawe (1943) Chitru sang the myth of the wanderings of the Kanaka folk in search of a clan-land given at the end of this chapter (pp. 298-306). Thus in the course of a few years all the myths in the repertoire of the clan Pardhan,—those dealing with the origin of the Gond race as well as those relating to the history of the clan—are recited before the assembled clan-members, and tradition is thereby kept fresh in their minds.

shrine and in the mahua tree, and the only attention paid to them is the lighting of small lamps for five successive nights at every new moon, or for three nights on the occasion of other village feasts. It is not until the cold weather when the Gonds celebrate in their own way—and usually at their own time—the Hindu festival of Dassera, that the Persa Pen is again propitiated with offerings.

The ceremonies on this occasion are an abridged edition of those performed in Bhawe and it is usually only the clan members living close to the seat of the Persa Pen and their *soura* who take part in the rites. As in Bhawe *sale* and *chaturur* are washed and set up at the *pen gara*, but there is no procession and no pilgrimage to the village. The sacrifice of chickens and a goat takes place at night in much the same way as during the great clan feast. A special feature is a large marrow set up on four bamboo spikes to resemble legs, and this figure is placed before the altar and cut in two by a single stroke from the sword of the *katora*, before the slaughter of any animals. It is said to represent a goat and is cooked together with the sacrificial food but since real goats are also sacrificed at this ceremony, this explanation lacks credibility. Similar marrows are slaughtered at the Dassera celebrations in the houses of rajas and prominent village headmen and there is reason to believe that the marrow is intended to represent not a goat but a human victim. This possibility however will have to be discussed in a different context. Nowadays the Dassera ceremony is always preceded by the First Rice Eating when food-offerings are placed inside the Persa Pen shrine, and there is much to suggest that originally the worship of the clan deities was connected with this first fruit rite and became later amalgamated with Dassera celebrations.

The third and last occasion when the Persa Pen is annually worshipped with the sacrifice of animals is the full moon of Pus which falls in December or early January, just before the harvest of the winter crops begins, and this is the proper time for introducing newly married wives of clan members to the Persa Pen and for initiating them thereby into the ritual community of the clan. In the performance of the rites in Pus the individual clans follow widely different usages. The members of some clans as for instance the Maravi clan with its Persa Pen at Irkapalli near Tilam do not even set up *chauwur* and *sale*, but leave them in their receptacles and sacrifice quietly a fowl in the Persa Pen shrine. Other clans, however, celebrate the rites in Pus with as rich a ceremonial as those in Bhawe and there is indeed very little difference between the two festivals. A short description of a Persa Pen feast as held at Sita gondi in the month of Pus will therefore suffice to complete our picture and demonstrate at the same time the variations in the ritual observed by the individual clans.

Sitagondi is a hill in Utnur Taluq rising some four hundred feet from the plateau, on which the villages of Pangri, Sitagondi and Pulera

In January 1942, when I attended the ceremonies, the beginning of the feast was delayed for a few days since Jangu Babu, the raja living in Pangri, and his family had been late in performing the rites for Jangu Bai, and these had to be completed before the Persa Pen festival could begin. It was therefore two evenings after the full moon of Pus when a procession including the *kaṭora* and the Pardhans with spears and drums left Pangri for the camp at the old village site of Sitagondi. Approaching the foot of the hill the *kaṭora* and two men stepped from the file, knelt down facing the hill-top and pressing their foreheads to the ground prayed to the Persa Pen:

Niwa din wala,  
nelenj tohta,  
pori menj simar.

Grain Goddess, Cattle Goddess,  
Goddesses of lamp and candelabra  
Earth Goddess, Wealth Goddess,  
Divine Mistress of the House,  
You oh seven sisters we salute.

*Ana Lachmi, Dhana Lachmi,  
Dipa Lachmi, Jalka Lachmi  
Bhui Lachmi, Mal Lachmi,  
Sami Lachmi,  
Sclar yeyung mik dandos.*

Later the men went in procession to the Auwal shrine, the shrine of the Village-Mother, and there the *katorā* sacrificed fowls and a sheep in the usual manner. The roasted livers of the animals and some cooked grain were offered to the goddess, and then the men returned to the camp and they and their womenfolk feasted on the slaughtered animals.

In the middle of the night the men ascended the sacred hill and assembled at the *pen gara* the place for the sacrificial rites. After clearing a piece of ground for an altar and purifying it according to custom the *katora* dealt round rice and all stood in a semi circle, praying to the Persa Pen.

God oh Raitar! May we remain  
well

Send us good fortune and luck  
to you we give flesh and eggs  
to our lives send good luck  
keep us well

*Raitar tsokot mat' irana,*

*jaisailar nana  
nisa pora meny antom  
ma jaisailar parankun  
tsokot ira*

After this prayer the relations of clan members who had died in the preceding year brought fowls and goats, by whose sacrifice the Departed were to be mingled with the Persa Pen and the ancestors. Such goats described as *tum* goats must be sacrificed on that night before the first grey of dawn. While the *katora* put the animals through the usual tests of grain eating and body shaking the donors addressed themselves to the Persa Pen and the Departed, praying

God Raitar To you and in the name  
of the Departed we sacrifice a  
*tum* goat you take it you two are  
now joined May your favour rest  
on us

*Pen Raitarj nana nisa satona porade  
tum bakra siton nisa yevta ingt  
musee masi mant nisa daa ma  
joro mani*

When the animals had been slaughtered the relations of each clan-member thus joined with the Persa Pen placed a rupee coin on the altar and this money was taken by the *katora* to be used for the expenses of this or future feasts.

The Pardhans, who had played trumpets and drums during the sacrifice, also received gifts from the donors of the *tum* goats. The principal Pardhan sat behind the altar, his *kingri* tied to a short spear. When the sacrificial food had been cooked and offered to the Persa Pen, the *katora* gave a few morsels to the Pardhan, who scattered it before his *kingri* invoking Raitar Sungalturpo and Rai Bandar.

Then all sat down to eat, first of the ceremonial meal prepared from the consecrated rice and the goats' livers and later the rest of the sacrificial food. None of the meat of the slaughtered animals or any part of the food taken up to the hill must be brought down, and all leavings were buried under the large stone by the side of the altar.

When dawn came the mingling of the recently Departed with the Persa Pen had been completed but no man was allowed to leave the hill that morning. For now began the proper rites in honour of the clan deities.

The hill of Sitagondi bears but few of the features generally associated with the seat of a Persa Pen. The pot with *chautour* and other ritual objects does not rest in a shrine but in the branches of a teak tree, and there is no *sats* shrine, for these symbols of the ancestors are

housed at the foot of the hill. The *sale* and the six bells, on the other hand, are deposited in a hollowed horizontal log which rests on the two forked posts. There are the usual two sun-shelters, a larger for Gonds and a smaller for Pardhans, at the *pen-gara*, but unlike the shelters at other feast-places they stand at right angles to one another, both facing the altar.

It was several hours after sunrise when the *katoṛa* lighted incense and sprinkled water in front of the hollowed log. All men lined up and embraced first each other and then one of the posts of the trestle. When all had thus performed a ceremonial greeting, the *katoṛa* took out *sale* and bells and eight men, climbing into the teak-tree, brought down the black *chauwur*, a white cloth and several minor objects from the pot. Then followed the ceremonial bathing of the *chauwur*, and at last it was tied to a bamboo with six nodes that had been leaning against the log with the *sale*. In contrast to the customs of other clans, the Atram men do not tie *sale* and *chauwur* together; but each symbol is kept separate throughout the ritual.

When at midday a procession formed, the *sale* and the six brass bells were carried by the *katoṛa*, while a *soira* of Maravi clan, a young boy liable to possession by gods, carried the *chauwur*. At a rapid pace the procession, accompanied by trumpets and drums, stormed down the hill; they went first to the old Hanuman stone of Sitagondi, next to the site of the raja's throne-seat, and then to the Aki, where it halted for some time. The symbols of the Sitagondi Persa Pen may not be approached by women, but to give the women an opportunity of making their offerings from a safe distance a small stool (*kutur*) was put down some thirty feet from the Aki and in front of this the women put a few coins and some grain, touching the ground with their foreheads in deep reverence for the idols. This act of worship, which stands for the far more elaborate ritual with which the Persa Pen of other clans is propitiated by the women (cf. p. 265) was followed by the introduction of the young wives of four Atram men to the Persa Pen. They had all donned new *sari* and came last to place their offerings before their husbands' Persa Pen. Each woman paid one rupee to the Pardhan and one to the *katoṛa*, and when on the following night a goat was sacrificed to the Persa Pen, they were accepted among the worshippers of the clan-deities and needed no longer to veil their faces, when the symbols were carried past the women's camp. From the Aki Pen the procession began its tour of the sacred places of the old, deserted village; first it moved to the *sati* shrines, then to the Village-Mother, to a mahua tree sacred to Bhimana, and finally to a dried up stream, where the symbols were washed with water brought in pots from a village well. It is said that in the old times the Sitagondi Persa Pen, like that of other clan-deities, was carried to the Pedda Vagu for the ceremonial bath, but that so powerful and dangerous are the forces released during the rites that

many people in villages lying in the way of the procession met an untimely death. To avoid such disaster the Atram people no longer take their idols to any other village, but arrange for the ceremonial bath to take place close to the foot of the hill. When it was over the procession returned quickly to the *pen-gara* on the hill top without again touching the camp.

That night the central rite with the sacrifice of goats and a cow took place on the hill top, and so similar was it to the ceremonies during the Kanaka Persa Pen feast at Marivai that no separate description is necessary.

But when the animals had been killed and the sacrificial food eaten, several men came down to the women's camp and asked for a girl of a five, seven or four brother clan in marriage for an Atram boy. One of the women gave a comb to represent the girl and some men produced a knife to stand for the bridegroom. Then a sham wedding was celebrated. A husband and wife who longed for children held the knife and comb respectively and over these the marriage rites were hurriedly performed. The childless couple felt sure that thereafter they would be blessed with offspring. Two goats were killed at this "wedding" and a few men stayed in the camp to prepare food for the women and children while the others rejoined their clansmen on the hill top.

Next morning the *chauwur* and *sale* were replaced in their receptacles and then the *soira*, took a fowl to the cult place. They d or even 'scratching' themselves roasted the liver and a part of the flesh as quickly as possible. This they ate hurriedly and then men and women came to the cave, they p chicken. Once

and then the whole of the animal, except the small bits eaten by the six men, is also dropped into the cave. After the completion of this rite, in which no young men may take part, all came down from the hill, the men of Pangri returned to their houses while the others joined the women at the camp.

There were no more ceremonies that day, but in the evening many people assembled again at the camp, and the atmosphere changed from the serious and solemn mood of the day before to the gaiety of a riotous feast. An open place had been cleared where men and boys danced to the sound of drums and Pardhan trumpets and the jingling of bell anklets, light flickered from many fires on the dancers' clothes whirling about as they turned and twisted. Palm wine had loosened their spirits, the dance was punctuated with hoarse shrieks and cries and in the intervals of dance followed pantomimes humorous and largely grotesque performances in which the actors improvised according to traditional or previously agreed themes, weaving songs and dances

into the short sketches. Duped husbands chasing their runaway wives, naked sadhus smeared with ashes, pompous petty officials, all came in for ridicule; the spectators enjoyed the crude jokes and the horseplay as much as the spirited performers and greeted each sally with shouts of laughter. The female roles were all acted by men dressed up in *sari* and their wives' and sisters' jewellery, but more than half the audience consisted of women who until then had of necessity remained in the background.

Before the ceremonies of the night began, all the men crowded the scene for a last dance, and then from the dance floor itself a procession of men and women headed by torch-bearers, Pardhans and drummers left the camp and moved slowly along the forest path to three shrines standing outside the former village. These shrines contain the *sati* and *ban*, symbols of the ancestors of the Sitagondi branch of the Atram clan. While other clans have usually only one *sati* shrine, which contains in addition the pot with the *chauwur*, here the Raja's lineage, the *kaṭora*'s lineage and the patel's lineage have each a separate shrine, and together the *sati* in these three shrines represent all the ancestors of the clan. No one knows whether these shrines, so like the huts erected over tombs, stand on sites where there were once actually the graves or burning-places of prominent clan-members, but this is by no means improbable, considering that roundabout are many tombs of recently deceased Atram clansmen.

While some men and women entered the shrines to make their salutations and the preparations for the sacrificial rites, small bands with flaming torches went from tomb to tomb saluting the Departed on this night devoted to their remembrance. Fowls and goats were then beheaded before the *sati*-shrines, their blood smeared on the centre posts and the roasted livers were offered to all the ancestors of the clan. The *sati* were prayed to grant good fortune and wealth to the living, and these ceremonies, in which the women took a leading part, ran very much on the same lines as did the sacrificial rite for Auwal, the Village-Mother, on the eve of the feast.

The nocturnal rites in honour of the *sati* which constituted, so to say, a collective propitiation of all the ancestor-spirits of the clan, were followed up next day by individual ceremonies at the tombs of near relatives where food-offerings were put down to the accompaniment of drumming and short prayers for the continued favour of the Departed.

The last of the ceremonies connected with the Persa Pen feast took place in the late evening of that day, when at a flag pole close to the ritual bathing place of the Persa Pen a chicken and a sheep were sacrificed to Ganamaisama or Ganamasai, a deity long associated with the Sitagondi Persa Pen. The legend which tells how Sri Shek brought this Maisama from Bourmachua to Sitagondi has been given in the last chapter (p. 230), but in Pangri I was told still another story of how Gana-



Maisama came to be worshipped at Sitagondi. Once upon a time, it is said that a man named Sitagondi came to the place and all the clans

with sacrifices. Maisama refused and rode on, but Persa Pen broke the buffalo's back with his hands and so Maisama was forced to stay whether he liked it or not. Then the clan god set up a flag and ordered Maisama to remain there and protect all the clansmen who came to the annual feasts. Near by the stone oil press with its hole can still be seen. The function of most Maisama is the guarding of gates and sacred places, and here as elsewhere buffaloes are among the sacrificial animals acceptable to these deities. But in this particular instance it is not unlikely that the story has a historical background, for Sitagondi was once the seat of a powerful chieftain and one can well imagine that an Atram Raja once detained a stranger somehow connected with the selling or pressing of oil and that perhaps after an unexpected death, the spirit of this stranger was first propitiated and later merged with the figure of a guardian to the approaches of Sitagondi.

### *The Cult of Clan Ancestors and Departed.*

We have seen that deceased clan members are formally joined with the clan deities by the sacrifice of a goat, and that the third evening of the Persa Pen feast in Pus is entirely devoted to the propitiation of the Clan Ancestors and the Departed. Thus the cult that centres in the clan deities strengthens not only the ties between the living, but also gives expression and reality to the idea of unity between the deceased clan ancestors, the recently departed, and the still living members of the clan. Associated with the Persa Pen of all clans, though not with all minor Jawa Pen and Sawere Pen, are *sati*, small stones or lumps of hardened vermilion paste which represent the female ancestors of the clan. With

Most *sati* are small stones, covered with layer upon layer of vermilion paste, but others, it is said, contain no stones but are lumps of vermilion paste with a rice grain as kernel. The Gonds' ideas about their origin are far from clear or concise: usually it is said that from the beginning of time the *sati* existed together with the idols of the Persa Pen, that they represent ancestors whose souls (*janal*) become gods and are therefore worshipped, but that no one knows exactly how they came into being. There is a vague belief that *sati* stones grew of themselves out of the ground when the spirit of a woman of particular merit obtained divine status, but I have never seen any individual *sati*-stone which was thought to represent

a woman remembered by the present generation. During the Persa Pen rites the *sati* are placed in a basket and carried in the procession, and when a *kaṭora* moves to another village he often takes the *sati* to his new place of residence.

Corresponding to the *sati*, the symbols of female ancestors, are the *kamk*, the symbols of prominent male members of the clan. With one single though important exception, the *kamk* are stones, between six inches and two feet high, and they stand usually inside the Persa Pen shrine in line with the *sati*. The songs of Pardhans speak of "eighteen *kamk*," and in one place, the shrine of the Pandera Persa Pen at Rompalli, eighteen *kamk* are actually to be found beside six *sati* (Fig. 37). It is, however, only at the old clan-centres, in the old clan *watan*, as the Gonds say, that *kamk* are found; for they may not be moved, and in these days of the dispersal of clans, when few Persa Pen are still in their old seats, *kamk* stones are far rarer than *sati*. An exception to the rule that *kamk* must be stones are the famous wooden *kamk*-posts at Narnur, the ancient centre of the Torosam clan. These *kamk*, however, have undergone a change in material and form as well as in significance. They are no longer the symbols of deified clan-ancestors who have to be propitiated at the annual Persa Pen feasts, but are monuments put up in the course of sacrificial rites designed to increase the prosperity of the donors, or in times of drought to induce the rain to fall.

Indeed, it seems that the deified clan-ancestors of Narnur are on the way to develop into a single separate deity. Men of the Torosam clan realize still the original nature of the *kamk* at the old clan centre, which incidentally no longer contains the Persa Pen, but in men of other clans I found the tendency to speak of the "Narnur *Kamk*" as of an individual local deity. In the jungle near the village of Narnur, closely packed together, stand thirty to forty wooden *munda*, square posts with pointed top and a deep groove cut into the wood immediately below the top (Fig. 52). Some of them are hardly taller than ordinary memorial posts set up for departed relatives, but others are well over seven feet high and about three feet in circumference. There are two occasions when such *munda* are set up: in the month of Pus a new post may be added in honour of the *kamk*, and in the month of Pola, whenever there is a dearth of rain, *munda* are erected and buffaloes slaughtered to end a dangerous drought. In both cases the posts are carved in the jungle without formality and then carried by men or taken by cart to the *kamk* place. The sacrificial buffalo for the rain-making rite may not be the property of any of the worshippers, but must have been secretly taken from the owner without the latter's knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

A post is set up close to the other posts, and before the buffalo is sacrificed all the men present pray:

1. This practice is said to be now less frequent than it used to be, but in Pola (August) 1942, a buffalo was stolen from a Mahar of Bhimpur and sacrificed to the Narnur *kamk*; the owner did not complain to the police.

See, oh god grant us your favour,  
give us prosperity, we are miserably  
poor, give us prosperity, let our  
hands and feet be sound

*Suja pendi pahli man mak anam sim,  
bikul langa atom, gharib atom mak  
anam sim, mak kai kalfun suk ira*

After the slaughter of the buffalo, the blood is smeared on the post, and then those present embrace the post. The embracing of *munda* posts is otherwise only done in the case of *sanal munda*, which are set up for those recently departed, and on no other occasion.

While *sati* and *kamk* together symbolize the community of nameless ancestor spirits, symbols of another type, known as *ban*, stand for individual members of the clan priests or the patel's family. These *ban* are small earthen saucers, some three inches in diameter as generally used for oil lamps heavily coated with vermilion paste. Successive coatings of vermilion applied on every ceremonial occasion, gradually obscure the original shape of the dish and the *ban* becomes a large lump of vermilion indistinguishable from a *sati* stone. Most Persa Pen shrines contain besides the line of *sati* also a number of *ban*, but not everywhere

They had been put there in memory of relatives of the *katora* of the Torosam clan and Sungo, the present village headman of Chidari and Khanapur, and brother of the same family as the *katora*, and of Torosam Kamu, the guardian of the clan god and *poi* patel of the Torosam *watan*. From the centre of the shrine, where they adjoin the row of *sati*, these *ban* had been put up for the following persons: the *katora's* father's mother, Sonu's wife, the *katora's* father's elder brother, Ramu's son, the *katora's* father, the *katora's* father's father's elder brother, Sungo's father and Kamu's younger brother (Fig 38).

The *katora* explained that *ban* were placed in the shrine only for such members of his own and the god's guardian's family who had either been of outstanding personality and merit, or who in their life time had

*ban* was put into the shrine on the night of the sacrifice of the Persa Pen and the *sati* was in memory of him when setting up the shrine of the deceased as follows

Stay now with the ancestors stay now  
with the god remain favourable to  
us  
Having died you became a god oh  
Maru Bai stay with the god, remain  
favourable to us

*Aime satikum tarso man pend tarso  
man mak pahli man*

*Sani pen ati Maru Bai pend tarso  
man mak pahli man*

The text of this prayer makes it clear that the placing of a *ban* into the Persa Pen shrine is intended to emphasise and strengthened the union of the deceased with Persa Pen and the ancestors. Their position close to the *sati* assures the *ban*, and through them the spirits of the deceased, of continuous attention and offerings at the time of all Persa Pen rites, even in times to come when the persons in whose name they were put up are long forgotten.

The fact that many Persa Pen shrines contain *ban* no longer associated with any individual Departed, and that under many coats of vermillion paint, the original shape of earthen saucers has ceased to be recognizable, seems to have led to a certain confusion between *ban*, *sati* and *kamk* even in the minds of many Gonds. There is reason to believe that certain *ban* of prominent deceased clan-members of former times became the *sati* and *kamk* of to-day, and also that the use of earthen lamp dishes instead of stones is only a recent innovation. Consequently it is not always easy to distinguish between *kamk* and *ban*, and although in the traditional descriptions of the clan-deities "sixteen *sati* and eighteen *kamk*" are mentioned as associated with Persa Pen, even the Gonds at the old seats of clan-gods frequently refer to the stones representing male ancestors as *ban*, and not as *kamk*.

Usually *sati* and *kamk* are housed in the same shrine as the pot with the ritual objects of the Persa Pen, but in some of the larger clan lands or where clan deities have been recently moved, the symbols of the ancestor spirits lie at a distance of many miles from the present seat of the Persa Pen. The situation in the principal *khandan* of the Maravi clan may here serve as an example. For many generations a Maravi raja—now known as *mokashi*—ruled in Tilani, and his Persa Pen was and still is at Irkapalli, some short distance away. The *sati* and *kamk*, however, are at Borda, a village some ten miles to the north. In the month of Bhawe, after the rites for the Persa Pen have been completed, the *kaṭora* and all the worshippers go in procession from Irkapalli to Borda, where there are three unroofed platforms, built of hewn stone, that bear the *sati* and *kamk*. On one platform there are seven *kamk*, stones about as big as a large fist, resting in small depressions and smeared with vermillion, and these represent male-ancestors; on another platform are eight similar stones, grouped in two rows of four, being respectively the *sati* of the *kaṭora*'s and the raja's family; on a third platform are seven such stones, and these are the *sati* and *kamk* of the Pardhans of the Persa Pen. Before these platforms a feast is celebrated, goats and fowls are sacrificed, and the worshippers play and dance all night, before they return the next day to Irkapalli or their own villages.

Though originally perhaps of no more than equal importance, the *sati* seem to be nowadays of far greater prominence than the *kamk*, and many of the clans, whose Persa Pen have in recent generations frequently changed their seat, have lost sight of their *kamk* and worship at the

annual clan feasts only the *sati* which accompanied the clan deities on their wanderings. It is thus hardly astonishing that the often moved Kanaka Persa Pen is associated only with the five *sati*, corresponding to the number of the *wen* of the Kanaka clan. But even at Sitagondi, one of the ancient clan centres, there are no *kamk*, and on the third day of the Persa Pen feast it seems to be only the *sati* that received sacrifices of fowls and goats. In the consciousness of the Gonds these sacrifices and offerings are however by no means destined only for the female ancestors and there is indeed a growing tendency to regard the *sati* as the symbol of *all* the deified departed of the clan, without distinction of sex. This tendency is strongest in clans which have no *kamk* and, except in places such as Narnur, Rompalli and the Tilanu area, where the separate symbols of male ancestors are still the objects of a regular cult, most Gonds have difficulties in defining the respective nature of *sati*, *kamk* and *ban*.

#### *Minor Rites and Ceremonies connected with the Clan Deities*

The cult of the deities and ancestors of the clan is not restricted to the great annual feasts, but forms an essential part of the Gonds' religious life. There are few rites and ceremonies at which the clan deities do not receive a share in the offerings, or their name is not invoked side by side with that of the particular deity receiving worship. The favour and protection of the Persa Pen and of the ancestors is believed to be indispensable for the success of any enterprise, be it the raising of crops or the joining of a man and a maid in marriage, and the greatest of all oaths a Gond can swear is by the name of his Persa Pen.

Each Gond house contains in its kitchen a corner, known as *pen komta*, where there is a low, earthen platform and a small oil lamp. This corner is daily cooked food the worshipped in the houses is sometimes also referred to as Rota Pen, "house god" and whether you ask a Gond for the name of his Persa Pen or his Rota Pen you will get the same reply.<sup>1</sup> If a house is defiled by a person entering with shoes or in a state of ceremonial impurity, the Persa Pen of the householder must be placated by the sacrifice of a chicken, and similarly any serious offence committed within precincts of a village containing the shrine of a Persa Pen must be expiated by a suitable offering in order to avert the wrath of the clan god. When, for instance, two Gonds of another village quarrelled in Marlavai and one hit the other with his sandals—a serious injury resulting in ex-

1 The Rota Pen as an aspect of the Persa Pen must not be confused with gods such as Boani and Isporal who are associated with certain families and whose dolls are sometimes kept in the houses. I prefer to describe these not as "house-gods," but as "family-gods" for it is accidental whether their idols are kept in separate shrines or in the owners' houses. Such deities are sometimes referred to as *Chudur Penk*, i.e., small gods.

communication of the victim—the offender was fined Rs. 7 by the men of Marlavai, and part of this sum was spent on chickens and food to be offered to all the deities of the village lest their indignation brought misfortune upon the village. Aki Pen received a large chicken, and the Village-Mother a small one, but a big cock was sacrificed to the Kanaka Persa Pen and a small chicken to the *sati*. When sacrificing the cock, the *kaṭora* spoke the following prayer:

He took off the sandal and hit with it,  
he defiled the god, desecrated was  
the god, therefore we give a chicken,  
so that all may be well again.

*Serpum tahtor, pator, pen baṭe mata  
paṭne arta pen, aden sati pori  
menj simaṛ, sudo kimaṛ.*

Apart from the daily food-offerings in the houses of the clan-members and an occasional propitiatory offering when a disturbance of the harmony of house or village is feared to have roused the deity's wrath, the Persa Pen receives also attention and worship at certain important junctures in the life of the individual. After the birth of a child, the father sacrifices at the next clan-feast a chicken to the Persa Pen, or, if he does not attend the feast himself, he gives a contribution to the *kaṭora* with the commission to sacrifice a chicken in the child's name. At every wedding a goat is sacrificed and the roasted liver offered by the bridal couple to the bridegroom's Persa Pen, and a person's death is followed by various offerings for the clan-god and the *sati*, including the sacrifice of a goat to mingle the spirit of the deceased with the clan-deities and ancestors.

Finally there are a number of annual rites, mainly connected with agriculture, when the Persa Pen and the *sati* are propitiated with offerings. The most important of these is the *Nowon*, the ceremonial eating of the first fruit of millet, maize and vegetables, which will be fully described in another context. Those men whose Persa Pen is in the village offer the first fruits at the shrine containing *chawwur* and *sati*, while the members of all other clans make separate small altars for the Persa Pen and *sati* in one of their fields by plastering a piece of ground with cow-dung, and thereon placing their offerings of grain and vegetables. Afterwards the members of each phratry or sub-phratry eat the first grain of the new harvest together in the house of a member of the most senior clan whose privilege it is to invite the other members of his phratry to the ceremonial meal.<sup>1</sup>

Similar offerings to the Persa Pen and the *sati* are given at the time of the first rice eating, which precedes the Dassera celebrations, and at that time too the members of each phratry take the ritual meal in common.

How important the offering of first fruits to the clan-deities is considered can be judged from a legend traditionally recited at the time

1. Pandwen Saga and Sarpe Saga though both six-men phratrics, count for this purpose as different groups, and the five-brother phratry is divided into two sub-phratrics whose members eat separately on this occasion.

of the *Nowon* by the Pardhans of the five brother phratry. The legend relates the calamities that befell Dundria Raur and the other inhabitants of Gudmasur Patera when they neglected the cult of the clan deities and deprived them of their share in the first fruits.

The people of Gudmasur Patera prospered, the granaries of Dundria Raur, the grandson of Yad Raur, and son of Jugat Raur, and all the Raur people were overflowing, so rich they were that for fully twelve years they forgot to offer the first fruits at the time of the *Nowon* and to celebrate the feasts of their Persa Pen in the months of Bhawe and Pus. The six brother clans, the seven brother clans and the four brother clans all held their annual rites, but on the altars of the five brother clans grew grass and trees rose on the places of worship. Manko and Bandesara grew sad and anger rose in their hearts at this neglect. Then they consulted together, considering why the five brother clans should withhold their offerings and how best to induce the Raur folk once more to perform their duties. Then spoke Bandesara:

Wealth in abundance we gods gave you,  
But thus you do not remember even me you have forgotten,  
To-day the seven brothers' feast place  
Is cleansed with milk and cow's urine,  
On the six brothers' feast place and altar  
Dwell happily the gods,  
To-day on the four brothers' feast place  
Dwell happily the gods,  
But the five brothers' gods are weeping  
Riches I gave them but they do not remember me,  
Wealth I gave them, but now they forget me  
Gudmasur Patera I will raze to the ground  
For they have forgotten me  
What shall I do to make them remember?  
The five brothers' gods are gathered,  
On the feast place they sit on the altar they sit  
Without food they sit, on the altar they sit,  
The gods have grown lean shrivelled are the gods  
What shall we do then? Give me your advice  
Then Manko answered her son and spoke  
'Isrugondi,<sup>1</sup> divine Bandesara  
Gudmasur Patera raze to the ground,  
Nowadays they do not remember us,  
What else can we do?

<sup>1</sup> Isrugondi is the term by which the youngest of several brothers is described but Bandesara has no elder brothers.

The god then spoke:

“From border to border stretches their wealth.

But even a tailless, one-horned calf.

Not a single calf shall remain to them,

Then surely will they think of me.”

Thus spoke Bandesara and, taking the likeness of a tiger, went amongst the cattle of the five-brother clans, hundreds of cows and one strong bull, guarded by seven herdsmen. Beating his tail and snorting fiercely the bull ran at the tiger, and for many hours they fought while the herdsmen, watching helplessly, wondered that the fight should last so long. At last the great bull, the splendid bull, lay dead and Bandesara went away thinking: “Now, at last they will remember me.” But when one of the herdsmen went to Dundria Raur and told him how his best bull had been killed by a tiger, the first loss of this kind in twelve years, Dundria Raur comforted him and said: “What is one bull? Many calves are born, and if in twelve years only one bull is killed, the loss hardly matters!” And he gave the herdsman a cloth and told him not to worry.

Bandesara in the likeness of a man stood near by listening to this talk and when he heard the words of Dundria Raur he said to himself: “Still they do not remember me!” Then much angered he went to the Aki post of the village and set a light to it, and a huge flame rose and sparks of fire fell on the roofs. Then Dundria Raur ordered all the women and children into the houses, and all doors to be closed. And when Bandesara saw that, he reflected: “If I burn all the houses, my people will perish, and my own loss will be great.” So he deadened the fire at the Aki post, and went away wondering how he could persuade his worshippers to remember him.

The next night Bandesara slew all the cattle in the pens and sheds of Gudmasur Patera, and when the herdsmen came in the morning they found all their animals dead, not even a single, tailless calf showed any signs of life. But Manko said: “If the Raur folk lose all their cattle, how shall they ever again give us sacrifices?” So Bandesara revived all the cattle and tried to think of another way of making his power felt to the people of Gudmasur Patera.

Then he remembered the *kaṭora*, Sirivalaval, and one evening when the *kaṭora* had returned from his fields as usual, his wife had given him a bath, and he had tied a new loin-cloth, and was ready to eat his meal, Bandesara took possession of his body, throwing him here and there, from this corner to that corner, raising him up and casting him down; for the whole night Bandesara gave him no rest. Only in the morning did the god leave him; then Sirivalaval washed, took a rope and his bulls, and went off to the field-work. Next evening Bandesara again possessed the *kaṭora*, and so it was on five nights; for five days Sirivalaval never ate his evening meal, and his wife



Machal Devi wondered greatly. Was her husband drunk or out of his senses? But on the morning of the sixth day the god did not leave the *katora* and his wife, greatly fearing, said to herself "What has happened to my husband? Shall I ask advice of the old men, the middle aged men, or the young men?" But she thought, "None can help me, I must go to Dundria Raur's mother."

Now Dundria Raur's mother was Ruk Devi, and Machal Devi set out to tell her of the *katora's* plight. Passing Dundria Raur's court-house, where he was sitting in state, she drew her *sari* over her head and passed quickly onwards to the house of Ruk Devi. But Dundria Raur, angered, said to those present "Who is that passing by the court house? No man, however great, passes here while I sit in state. How is it that this woman comes here?" And he sent two men, Sikarisara and Pardimara, with the order to bring her before him.

When Machal Devi entered Ruk Devi's house she found Ruk Devi swinging in a swing. Seeing her, Ruk Devi jumped up at once and said "My *katora's* wife has come, what can I do for her?" And she invited her also to

and not knowing who she was, began abusing her for passing Dundria Raur while he sat in court without even a sign of greeting. But Ruk Devi calmed the messengers, saying "Don't speak like that my sons. This is our *katora's* wife, who should be to us as a goddess. Great misfortune has befallen her, her husband, our *katora* is ill; perhaps the gods

Dundria Raur thought: "For twelve years no one came to see us, neither the *katora*, nor the *Pardhan*. My wife has come?" And he told Pardhan, for surely Hirasuk

The messengers found Hirasuk in his house, and told him that Dundria Raur wished to see him. "For twelve years no one has thought of us," said Hirasuk. "I will certainly come." And taking his precious fiddle.

The Pardhan went first to Ruk Devi and she gave him water to wash his feet, and a mat to sit on and tobacco to smoke. After a short while Dundria Raur came from his court-house, and Hirasuka rose and greeted Dundria Raur with a deep reverence. Then Dundria

Raur said: "How is it grandfather that I have not seen you for twelve years? For fully twelve years I have forgotten you and our god." And Hirasuka answered: "I too forgot you and the feasts of the gods."

Then Dundria Raur ordered the Pardhan to call together five elders, fourteen middle-aged men, twelve young men and twenty-one boys, as well as the *kaṭora* Sirivalaval. Hirasuka went first to the *kaṭora*'s house and greeted Sirivalaval with a reverence, and Machal Devi, the *kaṭora*'s wife, gave him water to wash his feet, and a mat to sit on and a leaf and tobacco to roll himself a leaf-pipe. And the *kaṭora* and the Pardhan began to question each other about their health and their families, and both wept from joy because they met for the first time for twelve years. "What may have happened to our gods?" They suddenly asked each other. "For twelve years we have forgotten them. For twelve long years we have given them no offerings. Let us go and see our sacred places."

Then they both washed and went to the feast-place, which was all overgrown with grasses and choked with weeds and creepers, only some stones bedaubed with vermilion remained. Then Hirasuka and Sirivalaval went to the forest, to the mahua tree in whose branches they had hidden the *sale* twelve long years ago; but it was there no longer, it had fallen to the ground and lay neglected at the foot of the tree. Carefully they picked up the *sale*, carried it to the feast-place, and laid it on a stone at the *pen-gara*; then they searched for the pot with the *chauwur*, and this too they found among the rank growing grasses.

From house to house went the *kaṭora* and the Pardhan calling all the clansmen to Dundria Raur, and they came bringing with them goats, chickens and grain, and all these provisions were taken to the *kaṭora*'s house, for it was Bhawe month and the time for the great feast was near.

Then all their kinsmen and wives' relations gathered too, and on the first day of the feast a great procession was formed and the *sale* and *chauwur* were carried round the village. But before the men could set out for the river, the *kaṭora*'s wife started her monthly period. "What shall we do?" they cried for they could neither continue the ceremonies nor return to the village; they decided to go hunting. The old men brought five dogs, the middle-aged men brought fourteen dogs, the young men a dozen dogs, the boys twenty-one dogs and the *kaṭora* and Pardhan each one dog. They tied golden collars round the dogs' necks, and holding them on leashes went off hunting. From early morning they scoured the forest, but not a single sambar, not a single deer, pig, hare, kite, crow nor porcupine did they see, and by midday both men and dogs were exhausted and very thirsty. Having unleashed the dogs the men went to the village-well of Gud-

masur Patera to quench their thirst and left the dogs panting in the shade of trees

Starting home by themselves the dogs first came upon a stream and there they drank long and deeply and then they went to Mana Dongargaon, a village of brass-founders of Wojari caste. In all the village, there was not a man for all were away selling their wares, but when the women saw the dogs and their gold collars, they said to each other "Look these are the dogs of Gudmasur Patera, they are the dogs of Dundria Raur, we must bring them water." So they poured water into troughs, but the dogs only sniffed at the water; then the women thought, the dogs must be hungry and gave them food in round bowls, but the dogs lay down in the shade and slept and did not eat. Thereafter the women took no more notice of the dogs and leaving the animals to sleep gathered in another part of the village,

. . . . .

gossiping women and returned to Gudmasur Patera.

When the mother found the traces of blood and the finger on the cot, she realized what had happened; she beat her head and breast, and all the other women started crying and wailing. The Wojari men visiting the nearby villages heard the noise and hurried home to discover what was the matter. When they heard that Dundria Raur's dogs had devoured one of their children they swore to take revenge. With guns, swords and spears they marched on Gudmasur Patera, one after another in long procession, one after another like a stream of ants.

When the Gonds saw the army of the Wojari men surround their village, they were struck with fear and the women began to cry and weep. But the *katoja* calmed them and he and all the men of Gudmasur Patera went to their Persa Pen, burnt incense and prayed for help against the Wojari. Then the god possessed the *katoja*, and spoke through his mouth. "Fear not sons, no misfortune will befall you in the fight; if they come for war, you also must take up arms; the Wojaris' swords will break first, victory will be yours." But the Gonds were filled with fear; only two men dared offer to fight and these two men were Roravaga and the one-handed Tutavaga, who had cut off his own hand when a cobra bit his finger; now he tied a sword to the stump and in his good hand he took another sword, and alone he and Roravaga fought the Wojaris. For seven days the battle last-

only two pregnant women were left, and these covered their heads and implored the Gonds to spare them: "If we bear sons, they will make bells for your gods, but if you kill us too, who will make your brass bells?" So the Gonds spared the lives of these two Wojari women.

After the fight, the Gonds resumed the Persa Pen rites where they had been interrupted; they took the *sale* and *chauwur* to bathe in the river, and then returned to Gudmasur Patera and celebrated the feast.

Soon the cattle of Dundria Raur began to increase miraculously, and every day up to six calves were born. Then the people of five-brother clans talked among themselves: "We must look for another place; all other clans have good lands, but ours is too small for our great herds." So some of Dundria Raur's men went out in search of a better place and wandered about for six months; but they found no suitable site, neither did they see any favourable omens, and so they returned to Gudmasur Patera.

One day Dundria Raur threw a cloth over his shoulder and went to see his cattle; a hundred thousand cows, a hundred thousand buffaloes and an uncountable multitude of sheep and goats filled the countryside for miles around Gudmasur Patera, and Dundria Raur said to himself: "How shall I find water and food for all this cattle?"

Then from the middle of the sleeping cows stood up the cow Karikamdan and spoke to Dundria Raur: "Do not worry. I will show you a land which is my own homeland, just as Gudmasur Patera is your homeland." Greatly astonished, Dundria Raur greeted the cow, saying: "So you are an animal that speaks! All right, I will follow you; you go ahead and I will come behind." And he returned to his house and began to prepare for the great move. The luggage was packed and loaded on to carts and elephants, and in five days' time all were ready to start. Dundria Raur then said to the cow Karikamdan: "Mother, we are ready, when shall we move?"—"Tomorrow morning we will start on our journey."

Next morning an immense procession moved out of Gudmasur Patera: in front went the cow Karikamdan, then all the other cows and the bulls, and then the buffaloes, both cows and bulls, then sheep and goats, both male and female, then carts and elephants, heavily laden then all the men armed, the *katoṛa* carrying the Persa Pen, and last of all the women carrying baskets and stores. First the cow Karikamdan led them west to Yelgapur,<sup>1</sup> then south to Telingana, then to Ganderlapatti,<sup>2</sup> then north to Jangaon,<sup>3</sup> but at all those places they came to no site which seemed favourable and so on they went to Chanda, and past Chanda northwards. Now they had journeyed for

1. Unidentified.

2. Part of the present Lakshetipet Taluq.

3. The present Asifabad.

one whole year all were worn out with travelling and the hair of the women carrying baskets on their heads began to fall out. One day they came upon four small wood peckers hammering at a tree in the midst of the forest and Dundria Raur bowed down, for this was a good omen, and ordered his people to camp. This was the site of the four villages Asmagarh, Kusmargarh, Hiriagarh and Waringarh.

Dundria Raur went up to the cow Karikamdani while she suckled her calf and she began talking. "This is the place where you shall stay. This shall be the home of the five brother folk just as it is my homeland. Take some earth in your hand and look." Dundria Raur bent down and picked up a handful of earth and when he opened his hand the earth had turned to gold, silver and precious stones. Dundria Raur marvelled and decided to stay. All around there was forest, to east and to west and to north and to south was forest. But the Gonds set to work, first they built some small shelters and then houses for Dundria Raur, for the old men, the middle aged men, the young men and the boys, for the *katora* Sirivalaval for the Pardhan Hirasuka and his sons Sudivan, Budivan, Hira and Suka. And they called the big village which covered four separate sites, Hiriagarh.

Then the men began to fell the forest and plough the land, and when the time for sowing came, they sowed small millets and jawari millet and other crops. The seed grew well until the stalks were knee high and then the grain stopped growing, but the cow Karikamdani prayed to Sri Shembu. "Now I have brought all these people here and there is no rain, give at least one hour's rain and all will be well." Then the rain came and it rained during the days of Mirg Ardona, Barepusa, Chotapusa, Yasurka, Magra, Purba and Utra and the stalks shot up but no ears formed.

In despair Dundria Raur and the other Raur people turned to each other. "What shall we do, if our grain does not grow? Who will give us anything to eat?" Then they all decided to approach their Persa Pen, and they gathered, burnt incense and prayed. "What shall we do? We have nothing to eat and our corn does not grow. Then the god possessed the *katora* and spoke through his mouth. "Why are you afraid? Cut five stalks of millet from each field and bring them here."

Then they went and cut five stalks from each field and the *katora* tied a new cloth and slit the stalks open and inside each he found diamonds, pearls and grain. Then the Raur people rejoiced, and all set to work to reap the fields. Gonds from other villages and of other clans came to help in the harvest and each worker received a wage of five stalks.

The Emperor Rumi Badshah, also called Tanumari Badshah, heard of the riches reaped in Hiriagarh, and he sent Dundria Raur a letter two and a half yards long and five spans wide, ordering the

Gonds to make four shares of all they grew and to send him three shares; one share he said he would allow them to keep for themselves: "For I am the owner of the land, I am the father, you are the sons, if you send my three shares, all will be well and you need pay no revenue, but if you refuse I will come and cut off your heads or tie you to posts, slit open your bellies and decorate the trees with your intestines." It took the messenger six months to reach Hiriagarh and when at last he arrived he handed the letter to Dundria Raur who saluted the Emperor's letter. But when he saw its contents his heart sank, and he said: "I have journeyed so far and undergone such great difficulties to get this land, and now the Emperor wants three-quarters of all I grow. If he had demanded one half, I would have consented, how can I give up three-quarters?"

Dundria Raur summoned all the people of the five-brother clans and showed the letter to the elders and all the younger men and to the *katoṛa* and the Pardhan, and they read it; reading it they wept. Then Dundria Raur called young Mathi Monji, who was used to dealing with elephants and could catch an elephant by his tusk and said to him: "Now the Emperor has asked for three-quarters of all our produce; if we give up so much we will starve. Will you go and fight the Emperor?" But Mathi Monji was afraid and refused. Then Dundria Raur called Somji, who could catch a tiger by his ears, but he also refused.

Then all the Raur folk loudly lamented, and at last Dundria Raur called Tutavaga the one-armed and Roravaga and asked them if it was right to surrender three quarters of their crops to the Emperor, and they answered that they would rather go and fight the emperor.

Tutevaga and Roravaga took two horses, they armed themselves with spears, daggers and swords, and bidding farewell to Dundria Raur, rode away to fight the Emperor. But before they left Hiriagarh they went to the shrine of the Persa Pen and prayed for the great god's blessing and protection; and as they prayed Bandesara spoke: "Do not fear, I will sit on your shoulder and no misfortune will befall you."

With light hearts Tutevaga and Roravaga started for Delhi. For six months they were on the road; at last they approached the great walls of the Emperor's town. They set their horses at the walls and jumped right over into the court where the Emperor sat in state. There they stood in front of the Emperor, neither dismounting nor even so much as saluting him. The Emperor marvelled at their sudden appearance and enquired of his Ministers: "Who are these valiant men who leap my city walls, and do not even salute me?" But no one answered, for no one knew. So the Emperor addressed the Gonds themselves asking them who they were and they

replied "We are Gonds from Hiragarh." At this the Emperor was greatly pleased, and he offered them seats beside him and gave them tobacco and hookahs to smoke. Then he asked them whether it was true that in their village jewels grew on the fields. And when they affirmed this he asked whether they had received his letter and they again said yes. "Well, will you send me three quarters of all that you grow on your fields?"—"We certainly won't," replied the Gonds "we would rather die than pay such tribute, you are the Emperor and we are ready to pay you revenue, two or three measures of grain from every house, but not three-quarters of all our produce. Then the Emperor grew angry and shouted "So! you are Gonds and you speak so proudly! I will show you what I will do to you and your Gonds. But Tutravaga answered "All right, send your army and we will fight." Saying this the two Gonds set their horses at the wall and jumped out of the city. Then the Emperor sent his army in pursuit but the two Gonds Tutravaga and Roravaga killed ten men with every stroke of their swords, for six whole months they slaughtered and slaughtered the Emperor's soldiers—it was like killing chickens and sheep. Then they said to each other "What is the use of killing all these fowls and sheep? We must fight with the Emperor himself." And once more they jumped the walls into the Emperor's courtyard, seized the Emperor, one brother holding either arm, and said to him—"We have killed your soldiers, now unless you make

Then the Emperor the Gonds a *magta* estate of forty five villages, including Persa Gumnur<sup>1</sup> Chudur Gumnur,<sup>2</sup> Merela, Chudur Merela, Raunur, Pitaguda,<sup>1</sup> Lingapur,<sup>1</sup> Tarelguda, Mankapur, Revulgudem,<sup>1</sup> Dampur,<sup>2</sup> Yellapatar,<sup>1</sup> Kanepalli<sup>1</sup> Metaguda,<sup>1</sup> Juviguda,<sup>3</sup> Malela, Chuntalapalli,<sup>3</sup> Loragudem Tapalapur, Imapur,<sup>3</sup> Mudapur, Putiguda,<sup>3</sup> Bidampalli<sup>3</sup> Chuntaguda<sup>3</sup> Talapet,<sup>3</sup> Singarupet<sup>3</sup> and Makulpet<sup>3</sup>. Then the Emperor ordered a charter to be written on a copper plate, and the two Gonds took it back to Hiragarh.

When Tutravaga and Roravaga reached Hiragarh they told Dundria Raur of the Emperor's grant and showed him the deed engraved on the copper plate. "Now we have got an estate of our own," said they to the assembled people, "we must leave Hiragarh and live on our *magta*." So Dundria Raur and all his Gonds packed up their belongings and journeyed for six months till they reached Lingapur and Motaguda<sup>4</sup> where they lived ever after.

<sup>1</sup> Now in Umr Taluq.

<sup>2</sup> Now in Anusabad Taluq.

<sup>3</sup> Now in Lakshetpet Taluq.

<sup>4</sup> Motaguda is an old clan-centre of the Kanaka clan in Adilabad and the above is the version of the legend as told by Kanaka Chitru, the Padman of the Motagudkar Persa Pen. Motaguda village was abandoned some fifteen years ago but the sanctuary of the Motaguda Auwal is still an important cult-centre (cf. p. 76).

PART III.  
THE ANNUAL CYCLE.



## CHAPTER VII.

### THE HOT SEASON.

THE Gonds live so close to the earth, their thoughts and daily life are so much ruled by their manifold works in field and forest and the changing seasons, that before proceeding to a discussion of their social life we must watch their activities throughout the cycle of the year. It is the tillage of the soil which sustains the life of the tribe and of the individual, and the whole structure of Gond culture, as of any peasant culture, rests ultimately on the successful raising of crops. But were we to view the material aspects of agriculture alone we should gain a false and one-sided picture, a picture of this essential part of Gond culture as seen through the eyes of an outsider. To the Gond himself life appears as a consistent whole; just as he does not distinguish between a natural and a supernatural world, spirits and gods having for him as much reality as persons of flesh and blood, so he does not place the technical acts of ploughing and sowing in a category different from that of the ritual observances which assure the sprouting of the crops and protect the ripening grain. They are the interlocking wheels of one mechanism, and any omission or mistake in ritual may have as damaging consequences as bad judgement at sowing-time, faulty rotation of crops or careless weeding. Even his leisure moments and most of his pleasures are bound up with the fate of the crops and are not, as the town-dweller's holiday entertainments, separate and distinct from his professional work. For in the slack season, when the Gond, freed for a while from daily toil in the fields, abandons himself to festivities and celebrations, he is laying the basis for the success of the coming year's harvest, and the fertility of the seed-grain is reinforced by the blessing of gods and the sprinkled blood of sacrificial animals.

In these chapters on the annual cycle of Gond life we must therefore place work, ritual acts and festivities in their right perspective, but the reader should remember that a complicated ceremony requires a longer description than, for instance, the process of ploughing or reaping, notwithstanding the fact that the ceremony may be over in one night while ploughing extends over many weeks. The space devoted to each phase of the annual activities bears consequently no relation to its actual duration or its relative importance in tribal culture.

The obvious starting-point for our account of the annually recurring events in a Gond village is the beginning of the hot weather, which

coincides usually with the first days of the Gondi month Durari corresponding roughly to February March<sup>1</sup>

The cold weather crops have been reaped and threshed, and with the storing of the grain the previous year's agricultural cycle has come to an end, while no activity relating to the next cultivation period has yet seriously begun. In a normal year the grain bins are now full of millet, wheat and pulses, and the cultivator has perhaps some money in hand from the sale of cotton or oil seed. It is a time when he can well afford to think of feasts and the celebration of marriages. Most Gonds have now little to do but tend their cattle and perhaps repair their houses. They may go to the forest and cut grass for thatching or fell poles as building material but the rains are still so far off that few have the energy to tackle the task of rebuilding or even repairing with any thoroughness. The fields are stubble covered and dust-coloured and the trees stretch leafless branches against a cloudless sky. Only in the veranda of your house or in the shade of an occasional mango-tree can you find refuge from a sun that seems bent on turning the whole countryside into an arid waste. In forest areas the cattle still finds ample grazing in the dried up, coarse grass on the hill slopes, but in the open country grazing must be supplemented by feeding with millet stalks, the principal fodder for all cattle in the Deccan. At harvest time it has been carefully stacked and is now doled out to the plough bullocks so that they shall be in good fettle for the coming agricultural work.

Gond villages with their grass roofs fall easy victim to fire, and at this season of the year many men guard themselves against the loss of their harvest and damage to their valuable bullocks by removing their animals and their grain to temporary shelters set up in the fields. These shelters are built round a framework of wooden posts, roofed with bamboo-mats and bundles of straw, they generally have walls of bamboo wattle. During the hot months the young men and boys sleep there to guard the grain, and some families transfer a good deal of their household implements to these airy shelters and use them as a kind of summer house, the women even cooking there at times. Women and older men also spend an occasional night in such shelters, but generally it is only the young men or young married couples who sleep there.

Even in the slack season a Gond is seldom at a loss what to do. He will twine new ropes of home grown hemp<sup>2</sup> or the fibre of the wild growing *Streblus asper*, carve a plough piece or a new cot, or he will

<sup>1</sup> The Gondi as the Hindu year is a lunar year and the months have consequently no fixed relation to the European calendar. To make up for the days lost each year a thirteenth month, called Donda, is inserted every third year after Dur Bhawo. My first year among the Gonds was enough, failed to realize that there was one month more. The time table for the feasts and ceremonies was also upset and several ceremonies were performed in months other than is customary. Here I have drawn up the annual cycle as it occurs during normal years.

<sup>2</sup> *Crotalaria juncea*.

break in a young pair of bullocks to the yoke, using a wooden sledge instead of plough or cart. He will go and visit relations in neighbouring and sometimes even distant villages, or go on a pilgrimage to the shrine of a deity to sacrifice an animal promised in times of illness or other emergency. Thus the Gond is seldom bored and if he has nothing particular on hand there are always friends to gossip with over a leaf-pipe of the newly harvested tobacco.

### *The Durari Rite.*

The time of leisure is moreover short and with the full moon of Durari begins the cycle of the new agricultural year. On that full moon night when throughout Hindudom the Holi festival is celebrated the Gonds too perform a rite resembling in many outward features the Holi of the Hindus. But the Gonds' Holi has a somewhat different significance and far from being solely an occasion for riotous horse-play, it is a solemn affirmation of the unity of the village-community. Whoever takes part in the Durari rite and eats of the Durari food belongs for that year to the village-community and he should not move to another village until after he has brought in his harvest. Families who have decided to shift and have perhaps acquired land in another village, do not participate in the Durari rite of their old home. Either they will go for the night to the village where they intend to settle, or if this is not possible, they will attend the ceremonies as spectators without partaking of the ritual food of the village which they intend to leave. But men who are preparing to found a new village on a deserted site or on a fresh clearing in the forest, go there to burn their own Holi fire. Durari is also the proper time for concluding or renewing agreements between masters and servants, and for hiring plough-bullocks.

The Durari rite which gives expression to the conception of the village as a ritual unit, is the responsibility of the village-founder or his descendant and successor, who is normally the headman. It is, therefore, the women folk of the headman's house who make the *garka*, round *dal*-cakes fried in oil, and small wheat-breads for the ceremony; the headman also provides the onions required for the rite, while the villagers contribute only pieces of coconut. In the headman's house two small frames of bamboo or wood (*phulera*) are made, to each of which ten *garka*, ten wheat-breads, ten onions, ten bits of coconut and ten blossoms of *Butea frondosa* are hung on strings. At the time of sunset men and boys collect outside the headman's house with drums and torches, and the frames with the dangling eatables are fastened to two long bamboo poles. Two processions form, each headed by a man carrying one of the poles, and these wind their way in opposite directions through the streets to a previously selected site outside the village. In front come drummers and torch-bearers and behind through the vil-

lagers carrying logs dry branches and bundles of straw In an open space not far from the village the processions meet and halt, and the two poles are set up, slanting, in holes into each of which a raw egg has been placed These poles represent Matral and Matri, a legendary old couple sometimes identified with the Gure folk and associated with memories of an ancient type of cultivation<sup>1</sup> Round these two poles, with their dangling decorations, the logs and branches are heaped The village priest then sprinkles a little water and scatters sweetened cooked *dal*, praying Durari Auwal also known as Durari Marke,<sup>2</sup> to come to the village and accept the food offering Fire is then set to the two stacks and in the light of the mounting flames small boys and young men race round the fires shouting and clapping hands to mouths

The two bamboo poles, which have been set slanting in the stacks, .. .. .

symbols of the plenty which results from a good harvest

During the night the young men steal a chicken from any house in the village and keep it for the next day's ceremonies. This day is called *Durdi* and early in the morning the boys go from house to house begging jawari millet. They boil the unbroken grains near the ashes of the Holi fire, and one man of each household takes a little of the cooked millet to one of his fields. There he performs a rite sometimes described as *Kuta Mohtur*, *kuta* being the dried jawari stubble still standing on the fields and *mohtur* a rite initiating a phase in the agricultural cycle analogous to the great *Mohtur*, the ritual First sowing. Besides the cooked food the householder takes with him an axe and he chooses a small bush or tree, growing on or near his field. In front of this tree he clears a small place, covers it with jawari stalks and puts his axe on top of the heap. Then he prays to *Dhartri Auwal*, the Earth Mother, *Anesirar*, the Gaure, and—rather surprisingly—*Lankepatar* *Ravana* for good crops and health in the coming year, and offers the cooked millet with the usual ceremonies.

Finally he fells the tree or bush with a single stroke of his axe and returns to the Duiari site where the stolen chicken is slaughtered, its flesh is divided between men and boys and eaten with the boiled millet.

The Gonds of Adilabad share the belief held by many aboriginals of the Central Provinces that the Holi festival is somehow connected with the death of Ravana, the demon king of the Ramayana.<sup>3</sup> They

1 Cf pp 235-320.

2. According to a myth quoted in Chapter VIII (pp. 358-361) Du an Auwal is identical with S wa Auwal or S wa Mark the Mother of the Village Boundary

<sup>3</sup> C Verner Elwin and Shamso Hvale *Folk Songs of the Makhal Hills*, Bombay 1944



FIG. 53. Lighting the Holi fire at Marlavai.

FIG. 54. Ploughing with the *wakur*.



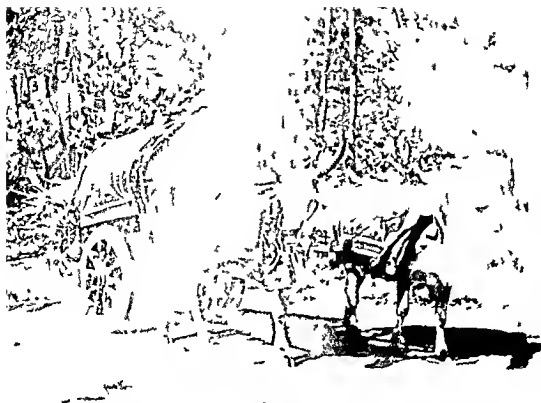


FIG 55 Gonds colour their trappings, deck bullocks and carts when Gonds go on pilgrimage

FIG 56 People of Marlayan setting out for an Auwal shrine



say that in the Holi fire Ravana is burnt and that his ashes, falling on the ground render the earth impure (*mutu*). Before any seed may be sown the earth must be cleaned by the Widri,<sup>1</sup> the rite which precedes the Mohtur.

To-day the Durari rite of the Gonds shares certain features with the Holi of the Hindus, and in some mixed villages Gonds and Hindus join in burning the Holi fire. But only the Gonds bring the poles representing Matral and Matra, and there can be little doubt that here an old agricultural rite of the aboriginals has been merged with a traditional Hindu festival. The symbolism of the Gond rite on Durdi morning is very clear. As long as the Gonds practised shifting-cultivation, abandoning their fields and clearing new land, every two or three years, March was the month when they began felling the forest-growth which had to dry during the rainless months of the hot season before it could be burnt in time for sowing the early crops in the ashes during the first showers of the monsoon. At the same time the stubble on the fields cultivated the previous year was collected in heaps together with pieces of unburnt wood, branches and newly lopped shoots.<sup>2</sup> The axe was then the most important agricultural implement, and is consequently still put down on the heap of stalks before which the food-offerings are given to all the gods and mythological figures connected with the tillage of the soil. The inclusion of Lankepatar Ravana among their number appears as a comparatively recent trait in an ancient ritual. Hemmed in by forest laws, the Gond is to-day seldom in a position to fell new forest, but the rite of First Felling, once no less important than the First Sowing, is still preserved and Gonds who shift to another village and cannot perform it on Durdi morning may not defer it longer than the next new moon-day, called Mand Amas, the eve of New Year's day.

### *Ploughing.*

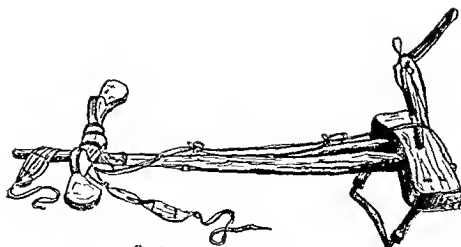
Though nowadays trees may be felled at any time of the year and a Gond fortunate enough to receive permission to clear a piece of jungle for cultivation does not necessarily wait till the Durari rites to start felling, no ploughing may be done before that day.

When on one of the days following the Durari full-moon a man begins ploughing, he bows once more to the Earth Mother, offers cooked millet and spiced *dal* behind the plough drawn up on the edge of the field and then draws the first furrow.

The agricultural year has now begun in earnest. The young men rise early and long before sunrise they take their bullocks and ploughs to the fields, still covered by the stubble of last year's crop or by dry

1. Cf. pp. 334, 335.

2. This process is still followed by such axe cultivators as Kolams and Hill Reddis and has been described in detail in *The Reddis of the Bison Hills*, pp. 80-84.

FIG XV *Wakur or broad plough*

grass and weeds from a period of fallow. Both stubble and grass must now be uprooted and the hard crust of the dry earth broken, for this work the Gond uses the *wakur*, a plough like instrument with a horizontal knife, curved at the ends which is fastened between two wooden prongs set nearly two feet apart into a broad wooden board. On this board the ploughman often stands to increase the pressure. With the *wakur* or broad plough he uproots dried weeds and the stubble of last year's crop, and so takes the first step in cleaning the surface of the ground. He ploughs from dawn till nine or ten in the morning, and then returns home for the morning meal and a rest, while the women, after cooking go to the fields to gather the stubble and rubbish, and burn it in heaps which are distributed more or less regularly over the fields. Only then begins the work with the ordinary one share plough (*ser* or *naingal*),<sup>1</sup> whose wooden share is reinforced by a long thin iron spike, held in a groove by the help of iron rings. This plough too only stirs up the soil without turning it over, and with it the fields are ploughed first in one direction and then again at right angles. The Gond ploughs with a ploughing staff in his right hand upped at the butt with an iron spike and ending in a small iron spade, with the spike he prods the bullocks while he urges them forward with grunts and shouts, and with the spade he clears the share of earth. No manure other than the ploughed in ashes of rubbish is used and the soil is not pressed

<sup>1</sup> The proper Gond word for the ordinary plough is *ser* but the word *naingal*, a corruption of the Marathi *negar* is now also in common use. Cf. Fig XX on p. 338.

<sup>2</sup> The burning of branches brought from the forest and spread over the fields is not practised by the Gonds of Adilabad.





FIG. XVI. Ploughing staff.

During the hot season there is no great pressure of work and wherever there are young men in a house they do most of the ploughing, even boys of fourteen or fifteen taking part in the comparatively light work of riding the *wakur* across the fields. In the heat of the day all work stops and only rarely will a man plough in the evening hours. The plough-bullocks are now kept in their shelters during the midday heat and fed almost entirely on the finger-thick stalks and dried leaves of millet.

In the second half of Durari the sweet corollæ of the mahua tree (*Bassia latifolia*), begin to fall and before they may be gathered and eaten,<sup>1</sup> a first fruit rite must be performed for Iruk Pen, the deity of the mahua tree, sometimes also referred to as Persa Bhimana.

A few days after the Durari rite, four *dal* cakes fried in oil are tied to a mahua tree near the village and the *devari* sacrifices a fowl and offers some fresh mahua flowers at the stones sacred to Iruk Pen that lean against its trunk. Only after this first fruit offering or *Nowon* may mahua flowers be eaten; violation of this taboo may result in illness or in visitations by man-eating or cattle-lifting tigers.

Gond months are reckoned from new moon to new moon, and the first day of Chait is the New Year's day of the Hindu year. This day is now also celebrated by the Gonds, but their simple observances constitute an imitation of Hindu usages and have no connection with any phase in their economic life. On that day they decorate their house-doors and the entrance to their cattle-sheds with mango leaves strung on strings, and at the shelters in the fields they erect bamboo arches and adorn these with similar garlands. Small food offerings are taken to all the shrines of the village and to the tombs of the recently departed which are also decorated with mango leaves. In the houses some special food is cooked and, as on all feast days, a little is offered to the owner's Persa Pen; but there are no communal celebrations, and an unobservant visitor might easily pass the day in a Gond village without realizing that it was a feast-day.

In the month of Chait, corresponding roughly to March-April, the ploughing of the fields and the burning of all dry stalks and rubbish

1. The corollæ of *Bassia latifolia*, popularly known as *mahua* flowers, are an important item of diet among most aboriginals of the Deccan, but their use even as food-stuff has at times been made illegal by excise rules, for from these corollæ a potent liquor can be distilled. When I arrived in Adilabad District, the Gonds were not allowed to use *mahua* flowers, but subsequently a more liberal policy was adopted and in the scarcity year of 1943 the Gonds of the hill tracts lived through many months mainly on dried mahua flowers. When boiled they are very good, and in those months I ate them almost daily.

continues. The gathering of the mahur flowers is in full swing and as the berries of *Buchanania latifolia* ripen, the women and girls, and often smaller boys as well, pluck them or beat them down from the branches, partly for the sake of the sweet pulp, but mainly for their nut like kernels (*chironji*). These the women extract in great quantities both for home consumption and for sale to itinerant traders.

But the Gonds' main interest in this month is the arranging and celebration of marriages, and after a moderately good harvest a village may be for days on end in the throes of festivities. All depends, however, on the amount of available food and cash. In March and April 1942, which followed a year of good crops, there was a rush of marriages in Marlavai and the neighbouring villages, and the people were so immersed in celebrations that the ploughing was seriously delayed. In the corresponding time of 1943, however, there was not a single marriage in Marlavai and only one or two in the vicinity, the cold weather crop had

rain or sufficient cash  
lings?' explained the

'All the more studiously did they apply themselves to the work on the fields the irksome shortage of grain having dispelled the complacent outlook of the preceding year.

Chait is not only a month of marriage celebrations. During this and the next month many Gonds go on pilgrimages to the shrines of deities to whom they have promised sacrifices and votive gifts. When seriously ill or threatened by other misfortune, a Gond often vows to

after good harvest

nd find the  
other god

Sungapur in the Pedda Vagu valley, and at Kanapalli Taluq, at  
clan centre of the K

that Gonds pray in times of distress

A man may be seen with

he invites a number of his friends and co-villagers to join in the pilgrimage and the feast he provides for them at the sanctuary is an important part in the fulfilment of the vow. In the hot weather of 1942 several such processions set out from Marlavai. Kanaka Lachu, the *kafoja* of the Persa Pen, had promised a sheep, a small clay horse, and a flag to Kanapalli Anval during the illness of his younger brother

Accompanied by some thirty women and a dozen men, he went early in April to Kanapalli, and after fulfilling his vow fed the whole company with mutton and millet at the sanctuary. Similarly Kodapa Bhimu used the comparative plenty of food to redeem a promise which three years previously he had made to Patena Auwal. Then he had fallen ill, and without consulting a seer had invoked Patena Auwal, promising a sheep and a goat to the great Mother. He had recovered but long lacked the means for the pilgrimage. Now he bought a goat and a sheep, and accompanied by his father, four friends of various clans and their women-folk, he journeyed to Patena, a good twenty-five miles over hilly country. At Patena they found the site round the three thatched shrines crowded with Gonds, who had all brought animals to sacrifice in fulfilment of similar vows. Bhimu and all his company had also brought some of their seed-grain, and after sacrificing the animals by cutting their throats they consecrated the seed before the Auwal, without, however, sprinkling it with the blood of the sacrificial animals. As they consecrated the grain, Bhimu prayed:

To pray for good crops we have come  
to your feet; give us good crops and  
good fortune, then in future we will  
come again; to worship you we have  
come. To fulfil the promise we  
gave you, we have come to worship.  
May we remain well and happy for  
one year, for six months.

*Tsokoḥ paṇḍi ni paḍalk naga wantom;  
tsokoḥ paṇḍi jaijaikar sim, marla  
wantom mune wanton, kalk artom,  
wantom, mukh kandi kintom kalk  
artom, wantom. Tsokoḥ sukam ne  
manamar, sal sarang mahinang  
manumar.*

After the rite the grain was redistributed among the members of the party and each took his share home to mix with his own seed grain. The belief in the Mother Goddess' beneficial influence on the fertility of the crops is foremost in the prayer and this belief overshadows indeed the ostensible character of the rite as a ceremony of thanksgiving. Hope of obtaining the deity's blessing for the new crops adds certainly to the attraction of joining such a pilgrimage, but a trip to one of these sanctuaries where one is sure of a good meal and likely to meet old friends and make new acquaintances is in itself welcome entertainment. Particularly women enjoy these pilgrimages and dress in their brightest clothes and best jewels so as to cut a figure among the other pilgrims.

But that year the hopes for the Great Mother's blessing were in vain. The crops were a failure, and the next year few Gonds had either grain or money to repeat their visits to the Auwal shrines. Throughout the hot weather of 1943 not a single procession of pilgrims left or even passed through Marlavai.

### *The Rites for Chenchi Bhimana.*

The full moon of Chait passes inconspicuously, but the following new moon, the beginning of the month of Bhawe, is the occasion of a feast celebrated by the entire village community.

The scene is once more Marlavai and the date the 3rd May 1943. It is night, starlit and clear. Under the mahua tree near the well, where both Chenchu Bhimana and Irak Pen or Persa Bhimana receive worship, a booth of jamun leaves<sup>1</sup> has been built over the stones sacred to Chenchu Bhimana and two small posts of mahua wood, a handspan high, have been leant against them to represent the god and his bride. For tonight is the wedding of Chenchu Bhimana, and though no one is quite certain who is his bride,<sup>2</sup> all have gathered to celebrate the rites with due solemnity. Inside the booth Kanaka Kodu, the *devari*, has washed, oiled and anointed with turmeric paste the two *munda*, and now he is already drawing the pattern of millet-flour and turmeric powder which will serve as an altar. The men have brought chickens and a goat for sacrifice, and these are put through the usual grain eating and shaking tests and then beheaded with a sword. While the *devari* places the heads on the altar, other men cut up the meat and set cooking pots on improvised hearths.

From the village comes the sound of singing and a procession of women moves slowly down the path to the beating of drums. In the centre, under a white canopy, the *devari*'s wife carries a light in a brass pot, carefully sheltering it with her sari. As the women approach the booth they begin afresh the song of the mahua tree

Barrel like my trunk, oh flowers of the  
mahua mother,  
Basket like my clusters, oh flowers of  
the mahua, mother,  
Tap tap tap, tap they fall, the flowers  
of the mahua mother,  
My people will gather, the flowers of  
the mahua mother,  
My people will dry the flowers of the  
mahua mother  
My people will soak the flowers of the  
mahua mother,  
My people will press the flowers of the  
mahua mother,  
My people will distil liquor from  
flowers of the mahua mother,  
My people will drink oh flowers of  
the mahua mother,  
Dumb men will wax loquacious oh  
flowers of the mahua mother,  
Tearing their hair they will fight oh  
flowers of the mahua mother,  
Fence poles they will seize, oh flowers  
of the mahua mother,

*Gade alsor modu nawa, domal irpena  
bayena,  
Topla alsor kape nawa domal irpena  
bayena  
Tsoike, tsike nathanana, domal irpena  
bayena,  
Na kunbur peranire domal irpena  
bayena,  
Na kunbur uoranire, domal irpena,  
bayena,  
Na kunbur nahanire domal irpena,  
bayena  
Na kunbur paskanire, domal irpena  
bayena,  
Na kunbur kal rehanire, domal irpena  
bayena  
Na kunbur undanire domal irpena,  
bayena,  
Wakor woru uarkanure domal irpena  
bayena,  
Jusi jagra terusanire, domal irpena,  
Welum kusa teranire, domal irpena  
bayena*

1. *Eugenia jambolana*.

2. In a song sung later by the women Bhimana's wife is referred to as Sira but none of the men present remembered that, and the only suggestion volunteered was that Bhimana's wife was Durpan, the Gonda of today. The other Indian aboriginals, often confuse the great god Bhimana with Bhuma, the second of the Pandava brothers.

In the rubbish-heaps they will roll, oh  
flowers of the mahua, mother.

*Poding poding kũruskanana, domal  
irpena, bayena.<sup>1</sup>*

With the end of this song, a few women enter the booth and the light is put down before the *munda*. An unmarried girl dips a ficus leaf into turmeric water, and sprinkles it over the two small posts representing Bhimana and his bride, as at weddings it is sprinkled over the young couple. This should really be done by the wife of a man of a four-brother clan, but since there are no such clans in Marlavai, young girls of other clans, who are at least potential wives of four-brother men, have to act instead.

Meanwhile the whole company of the village womenfolk have sat down outside the booth and they now begin a song that enumerates all the four-brother clans in the form of a stereotyped dialogue between Bhimana and a woman married to a Shermaki man. Bhimana asks her for the wives of her husband's 'brother' (i.e., men of the same phratry, but not the same clan as her husband) and she replies that they are wives of Pusam, Marpachi, Partsaki, Naitam, Tekam, Mangam, Kara and Kova; all four-brother clans.

Hardly has this song ended, when a new tune is taken up, and this time the song describes Bhimana eating the Nowon, the first fruits of the mahua tree, and how he is ministered to by his wife Siro. A few lines will suffice to show the main characteristics of this song:

*Rela rerela, rela rerela,*

Rise Siro, rise Siro, bring cowdung.  
Siro,

Rise Siro, rise Siro, plaster the  
house,

He eats the first fruits, Siro, he eats  
the first fruits,

The mahua tree's first fruits he eats;

Rise Siro, heat the water, rise Siro,

Our Bhimana eats the first fruits;

Rise Siro, prepare the bath, rise Siro,

Our Bhimana eats the first fruits;

Rise Siro, rub his back, rise Siro;

Our Bhimana eats the first fruits;

Rise Siro, give the loin-cloth, rise

Siro;

Our Bhimana eats the first fruits;

Rise Siro, make up the fire, rise Siro;

Our Bhimana eats the first fruits;

Rise Siro, heat the pan, rise Siro;

*Rela rerela, rela rerela,*

*Teda Siro, teda Siro sarawata Siro  
Siro,*

*Teda Siro, teda Siro, ron usa*

*Nowon tintor, Siro, nowon tintor;*

*Ipu mara nowon tintor;*

*Teda Siro, yer kasusa, teda Siro,*

*Ma Bhimal nowon tintor;*

*Teda Siro, yer tora, teda Siro,*

*Ma Bhimal nowon tintor;*

*Teda Siro, perk soka, teda Siro,*

*Ma Bhimal nowon tintor;*

*Teda Siro, dhotere sim, teda Siro,*

*Ma Bhimal nowon tintor;*

*Teda Siro, sodel mandi kim, teda Siro,*

*Ma Bhimal nowon tintor;*

*Teda Siro, dhobra uha, teda Siro,*

1. The word *bayena* (mother), repeated in every line, is often used in songs to balance the lines; *kũnbur*, derived from the Marathi term *Kunbi* means 'peasants,' but may here be translated 'people,' the spirit of the mahua tree addressing the Gonds as 'my people,' or literally, 'my peasants' as a landlord may refer to his tenants; *jũli jagra* is the quarrel in which opponents grasp each other's hair-tufts; and the fence poles are pulled out of the ground to serve as weapons in drunken quarrels.

Our Bhimana eats the first fruits;  
 Rise Siro, parch the millet, rise Siro;  
 Our Bhimana eats the first fruits

*Ma Bhimal nou on tintor;*  
*Teda Siro, sama pirusa, teda Siro,*  
*Ma Bhimal nou on tintor.*

So the song continues with the description of Bhimana's meal, and while the women sing the men roast the liver and the *devari* places this on leaves before the altar together with small balls made of mashed *chironji*, sugar and wheat-flour. The women of each household have brought large brass bowls full of this tasty mixture from the village, and after the *devari* has offered a little to Chenchi Bhimana with a prayer for good crops, he and four men eat of the consecrated food inside the booth.

Then a meal of goat-curry and *chironji*-mash is served to the whole assembly, the women sitting to one side of the booth and the men to the other. After this ceremonial first eating of the *chironji*, all the wild fruits of the season—*mahua*-flower, *chironji* and others—may be sold and taken to other villages, while up to now they could only be eaten by the villagers themselves.

When all have finished eating, a stack of millet-straw and dry  
 . . . . . two young men,  
 . . . . . up as a woman,  
 . . . . . 'atri, a legendary

folded in prayer.

Soon the fire burns down and Matral and Matri take sticks and spread the ashes over the ground. Some young boys crowd round 'the woman' and addressing her as 'mother' clamour for food. She pretends to deal out millet from a basket, and then Matral, Matri and the boys pace quickly round and round the ground covered over with ashes; Matri carrying a basket and broadcasting imaginary grain. The seed sown, they resume their round but this time pretending to reap. All

. . . . . it is a fabulous harvest and all  
 . . . . . hey sit down in a row, each  
 . . . . . d step other boys to represent  
 village servants; the *haveldar*, the *kotwal*, the blacksmith, the carpenter

1 Kernels of *Buchanania latifolia*

2 Cf pp 141 202, 235

and the leatherworker, the latter sitting a little to one side.<sup>1</sup> To one and all Matri deals out grain and they tie it up in their cloths. Finally Matral gathers together the corners of his blanket, and with an enormous effort, as though it were heavy with grain, lifts it on to his shoulder and staggers into the booth to thank the god for the good harvest. All those who have received a share of the magical harvest, sling their bundles over their shoulders and follow him into the leafy booth and then they all line up for a general fraternization with the customary embrace. To the beating of drums men and women return to the village, where the women of the patel's house wash the men's feet, and there is another fraternization ceremony. With this the feast has come to an end, and all go to sleep in their own houses.

The rites performed on that new-moon night fall clearly into two parts: the first fruit offerings of *chironji* and the pantomime of the sowing, harvesting and sharing of grain-crops. Why the feast is called Chenchi Bhimana Marming, the wedding of Chenchi Bhimana, remains somewhat obscure. The name Chenchi Bhimana itself is not fully explicable, but it seems that the epithet 'Chenchi' refers to the god's rôle as protector of crops and giver of good weather. The only reference to the 'wedding' is the sprinkling of the *munda* representing Bhimana and his bride with turmeric water and perhaps the song illustrating the duties of Bhimana's wife. But far more important is the offering and ceremonial eating of the food prepared with *chironji*, for this part of the rite has the practical function of lifting the ban on the removal of *chironji* and other jungle-fruit from the village. The song about Bhimana eating the first fruit makes this aspect quite clear, and it is only the celebration of two first fruit rites, one with mahua flowers earlier in the year and the other with *chironji* as offerings, which is somewhat puzzling. For the first fruit rite in Durari at the place sacred to Iruk Pen or Persa Bhimana apparently opens the season not only for the eating of mahua flowers but also for other jungle fruits and the first eating at the Bhimana Marming feast ends the prohibition on the removal and sale of *chironji* and of mahua flowers alike. The delightful song about the use of mahua flowers was, of course, more to the point when the Gonds were free to distil their own liquor.

The second part of the night's performance is sympathetic magic *par excellence*. By enacting all the phases of the agricultural year, from the burning of the jungle and the sowing of grain to the reaping and measuring of the crop, the Gonds hope to influence the course of coming events, so that their coming harvest may be as abundant as the imaginary crop reaped by Matral and Matri.

1. The old Indian system of village-servants has to some extent been adopted by the Gonds, and now there is in most villages a *havildar* whom the headman uses as messenger and who has to secure supplies for touring officials; in a few villages there is moreover a *Mahar* or *Madiga* who acts as *hotwal* with similar duties. All such village-servants receive from every household dues of grain at harvest time cf. the song on pp. 349, 310.

What strikes us, however, is the mode of tillage dramatized and the absence of any reference to the plough. Matral and Matri cultivate like Kolams and not like Gonds of the present age; they burn the jungle and sow in the ashes without ploughing and at last thrash out the grain under foot. The Gonds have no explanation for the discrepancy between the scene enacted and their real method of cultivation, but it is quite usual for religious or magical rites, handed down with little change from one generation to the other, to reflect customs of past ages and the sympathetic magic at the new moon of Bhawe leads straight to the problem of the Gond's original form of agriculture. Do their myths and traditions throw any light on this question?

There is a story, recited by Pardhans and Totis, which tells of a time when the Gonds had no jawari-millet and subsisted on the seeds of grasses. The hero is Raja Sirar, the son of the Earth Goddess, and the story begins by relating how many gods lived in Raja Sirar's village; they had no proper grain but gleaned the seeds of grasses and ate them parched or made into gruel. So they decide to go and find Anarani, the Corn Queen:

Grass seeds, Raja Sirar,  
Grass seeds, he has brought,  
Food he cooks and eats  
But his stomach is not filled  
'Hanram, what shall I do?'  
The Corn Queen where may she be?  
Who will tell us where she lives?"  
Earth Goddess, the mother, (spoke)  
"The Corn Queen's abode who will  
tell us?"  
Son, go to Shembu Mahadeo,  
So that her abode he may tell you"  
"Shembu uncle, this grass does not fill  
the stomach,  
What shall we do?"  
We cut the grass and bring it home,  
We thresh the grass  
And eat the seeds,  
We grind the seeds and  
Eat them boiled  
Our stomachs are not filled.  
Where, oh where is the Corn Queen  
Tell me where she lives."

*Jari usja Raja Sirar,  
Jari usja lain,  
Gaso lin tindur;  
Ratu peti rindaxe sond  
"Hanram bahan lila?  
Anarani baga marta?"  
Tana jara bor uchanur?"  
Bhwi Lachmi mata baye,  
"Anarani jara bor uchanur?"*

*Peta Shembu Mahadeo naga so  
Manje tara jara uchanur"  
"Shembu mame id jarite peti nindo;*

*Batal kinte bahan?  
Jari kein tarantori,  
Tan palom  
Tana usja tintom,  
Tanh norantom,  
Tara galo tintom  
Masa peti rindo,  
Anarani baga manta  
Tana jara xcha."*

Anarani, the Corn Queen, stands in Gond legends for the jawari-millet and it is the culture-hero Anesirar or Raja Sirar who first obtains the millet and learns how to cultivate with plough and bullocks (cf. p. 380).

The story thus assumes the existence of a time when the Gonds knew neither the jawari-millet (*Sorghum vulgare*), which is now their



staple food, nor the art of ploughing. The reference to grass seeds which were eaten, but 'did not fill the stomach,' may apply to the seeds of wild grasses such as are still occasionally gleaned and eaten, or equally it may be a scornful allusion to the small millets *sama* (*Panicum miliare*) and *bari* (*Panicum italicum*); for it is very probable that in the days when the Gonds practised shifting-cultivation with axe and hoe, the small millets were their main crops. Though less bulky than jawari-millet these small millets are an excellent food, and to decry them as 'not filling one's stomach,' would be explicable only as a poetic exaggeration in a story glorifying jawari-millet.

The manner of sowing during the magical rite at the Chenchi Bhimana feast suggests certainly a connection with the cultivation of small millets. For only these may be broadcast by hand; *jawari* must be dibbled or sown with a sowing plough.

Another faint echo of the time before the soil was tilled with the plough is found in the long myth recited at memorial feasts. Sri Mahdu, who appears there in the role of the first man and culture-hero, is in one episode taught to cultivate by Parbo Niranjan Guru and given an axe to fell the jungle. When he has cut the trees the *guru* tells him to pile up the wood in a heap, burn it and sow the seed in the ashes. Pahandi Kupaṅg Lingal, too, is popularly believed to have sown the 'god's rice' (*pen wanji*) on land that had been dug up by wild pigs and then to have brushed over the field with a bamboo broom, exactly as is still done by Kolams. Similarly the myth of the four-brother folk quoted in Chapter V relates how the four gods in the guise of Gaure make a clearing (*marmā*) on which, without ploughing, they grow *sama*. The heroes of the tale require this *sama* and no other crop for the *Nowon*, the first fruit rite, and this too suggests that *sama* cultivated in a primitive manner has a very old place in Gond culture.

Taken as a whole these glimpses of ancient methods of tillage may be regarded as proof that the recollection of the times of axe-cultivation is not yet entirely dead in the tribe. But it is only in the legends and myths that such glimpses occur; local tradition knows of no period when the Gonds of Adilabad cultivated with hoe and digging-stick instead of with plough and bullocks.

### *Work and Feasts in Bhawe.*

Bhawe, often described as Persa or Great Bhawe and corresponding to May, is the month when the heat of summer reaches its height. Burning hot winds sweep across the hills, carrying dust and dry leaves high into the air. Even the nights are now hot and oppressive and men and beasts seek refuge from the midday sun in whatever shade they may find. But though the heat sets a brake on outdoor work during the middle of the day, the fierceness of the sun does not deter the Gonds from strenuous exertions in the service of gods. Indeed Bhawe is a

month of feasts and celebrations and pilgrimages to distant shrines. The greatest feasts of the year, the main rites in honour of the clan deities are performed in this month, as well as a great number of ceremonies for family and other minor deities.

In the work to be done there is little change between Bhawe and Chait. The ploughing continues so far as the many feasts allow, more houses are built and repaired and wood is stacked under the eaves of houses and in store sheds in reserve for the rainy season, every afternoon the women go by threes and fours to the forest and return at sunset carrying large bundles of dry branches on their heads. Moreover they spend much time in gathering and shelling *chironji*, which may now be sold and taken away from the village.

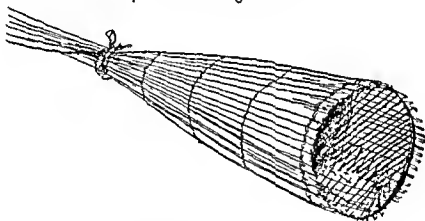


FIG XVII Fish trap

Bhawe is also the time for fishing, most streams have run dry, and in the few remaining pools the fish are easily stupefied by poison and can then be caught. As poison the Gonds use the bark of the *kirangi* tree<sup>1</sup> and the *garela* tree,<sup>2</sup> which they pound and throw into the still pools. The poison of these barks is not sufficiently powerful, however, to operate in deep pools or running water. Sometimes the Gonds block small streams and wait till fish have accumulated in the pool above the weir, when they bale out the water with baskets and catch the fish by hand. Most of the fishing is done by women, and large parties will go on expeditions to streams many miles from their villages. These trips are mainly undertaken for the fun of fishing and the bathing in shady pools, for the catch is usually very small. But they break the monotony of house work and there is always the possibility of an amusing chance meeting or mild adventure. A short musical sketch I saw performed at a feast illustrates the kind of encounters women can have on their fishing trips.

1. *A. ac. a. lenticularis*.

2. *Cle. tanthus coll. nus*.

A young girl and an old woman appear on the scene with their fishing baskets and introduce themselves with a song:

GIRL:

Of Gadeguda is the grandmother,  
At Devurkasa is the fishing-pool.

*Gadeguda babi mandare,  
Devurkasa dohor mandare.*

BOTH TOGETHER:

Away, girls, let us go;  
To catch fish let us go  
Away, girls, let us go,  
To catch fish, let us go,

*Dang sango<sup>1</sup> dakať  
Mink pia dakať,  
Dang sango dakať.  
Mink pia dakať.*

Still repeating these lines, the two women make movements as if baling out a pool. Two men appear and the girl looks up and stops baling:

GIRL (speaking):

Grandmother, see who comes.

*Kako, kako, borte water sura.*

OLD WOMAN (speaking):

Who has come to look at my grand-daughter?

*Bora watit, na tang miaun poro nadur?*

MAN (speaking):

Mother, to carry off your grand-daughter we have come.

*Bai, bai, ni tang miaun pisiwatlen watom.*

OLD WOMAN (speaking):

Oh, you whoremonger, why have you come? Is my grand-daughter so cheap?

*Rand lekalir, ige бага watit na tang miar sasto manta?*

At that the two men rush at the girl, but the old woman wielding her fish-basket, beats them off and they run away. Then both women return to their fishing and their song.

But not all girls are as well protected as the grand-daughter in the sketch, and many a fishing trip provides more excitement than the catching of fish and crabs.

The weddings celebrated with full rites are usually over by the end of Chait, but the weddings of girls who have been previously married are often held in Bhawe. Such a wedding known as *pat*, is seldom more than a purely domestic ceremony. Only the nearest relations and friends take part, and it is therefore customary to hold them at the end of the marriage-season, when all the grand weddings, in the neighbourhood are over.

### *The Annual Rites for Family Gods.*

The great feasts in honour of the clan-deities at the full-moon of Bhawe are usually preceded by the more or less elaborate rites for such deities as Jangu Bai, Boani, Bhimana or Rajul Pen who may happen to have a shrine in the village. The cult of such a deity is as a rule the responsibility of an individual family, but when the owner of the idols

1. Sango is the term of address between the wives of brothers or the daughters of sisters; here it refers obviously to members of the fishing party who are imagined but not actually seen on the scene.

performs the annual ceremony the whole village community joins in the celebrations

In Marlavu are the shrines of Dauri Malkal, the family god of Soyam Maru and of Bhimara and Rajul Pen whose worship and idols Kursenga Madu took over from a Kolam. The two shrines stand close together, and in 1942 the rites for all the three gods were held jointly in great style about a week before the feast of the Kanika Persa Pen.<sup>1</sup> On the morning of the first day the idols were taken out of the shrines by their owners and arranged beside several stones under a *dondera*<sup>2</sup> tree two bunches of peacock feathers in carved holders, several iron spikes horses of clay and brass, long leashed whips with brass bells on stubby handles swords, spears and flags on large bamboo poles. Towards midday adult men and many boys assembled before the idols, while the women watched from the shade of a distant malua tree. Kursenga Madu the seer of the village, conducted the rites assisted by Soyam Maru, but their kinsmen all lent a hand, anointing the ritual objects with oil and polishing the weapons. Madu began by drawing the usual patterns of turmeric and vermilion powder for the temporary altar, burnt incense in a small earthen vessel, and then all the men present standing in a semi circle, held their hands over the incense burner which Madu carried past. Next he scattered *dal* sweetened with sugar before the idols, and all the men thronged round, knelt down and touched the ground with their foreheads remaining there kneeling or crouching their heads but a few inches from the idols. Closeby stood young men beating large cylindrical drums and Pardhans blowing trumpets. Suddenly a young athletic looking figure clad in a *dhoti*, with silver belt and a clean white turban, began to tremble and sway, he fell forward on to his knees his face took on a strained and painful expression the eyes were half closed and, as if impelled by some outside force, he threw himself about, jerking and twisting, he crept towards the idols and raised his head and chest close to the peacock feathers, but without touching them swayed back, rose unsteadily to his feet and moved trembling to the

first drum lig

and sank to t

back trembling violently. It was a young man who had come to Marlavu only that year, and no one knew that he was liable to possession by gods.

But all expected the godhead to possess Kursenga Madu and to forecast through his mouth the fortunes of the coming year. Soon the seer showed signs of trance and kneeling before the idols, began slowly

<sup>1</sup> Dhawe was unusually early (April) had an extra month, were late with moon and Rajul Pen took place on



FIG. 57. The *bhaktal* crouching before the Bhimana idols while uttering his prophecies.

FIG. 58. Worshippers prostrating themselves before the Bhimana idols.





FIG 60 The whip  
curling round the  
blackhead's arms



FIG 59 The black  
head's arms in the  
air, the whip of  
the blackhead's arms

to swing to and fro; someone loosened his turban and it fell to the ground leaving his head bare. The three drummers, standing upright in line, one behind the other, intensified the rhythm, which rose to a mighty roar. Madu stood up, a small fragile figure, the figure of an old man with bones showing under a copper brown skin; he danced, a few rapid steps, lifting the knees high; then stood stock still, threw back his head and raised his arms skyward as though towards invisible beings. So he swayed, backwards and forwards, but after a few minutes he went to kneel before the idols and took from the altars the three whips. Clutching them in both hands, he stayed a few moments, shaking so that the brass bells on the handles jingled frantically. Then rising suddenly, staggering, only with difficulty keeping his balance, he sought out of the crowd three men. To each he handed one of the whips, laying it lightly over the shoulders; one was Lachu Patel, the village headman, one Torosam Lingu and one Kodapa Kasi. A small open space was cleared between the shrine and the idols and the three men grasped the handles of the whips, and stood ready, the leash ends held captive. For a moment Madu remained swaying in the centre, then with a sudden rush he threw himself on one knee before Laihu Patel and resting his right hand on the ground, flung up his left arm above his head, shouting: "*Bhimal ko!*" Quick as lightning, Lachu Patel braced himself and, lifting his whip brought it cracking down on Madu's bare skin so that the leash curled itself several times round the forearm. A murmur ran through the crowd, Madu rose, staggered towards Torosam Lingu, and stretching himself to his full height, shouted again; this time the blow fell on his back. Now with every step the power of the godhead grew, and Madu rushed violently from one side to the other again and again inviting the whip to fall with hoarse defiant shouts of: "*Bhimal ko!*," "*Rajul ko!*" Now and then, when the godhead dimmed momentarily, he went to kneel before the idols, as if to gain new strength for the flaying. The whirr of the whip as it cut the air, and its sharp twang on arm and back testified to the severity of the blows, but Madu's bare skin showed no swelling or change of colour. After a while, Soyam Maru, a man as thin and as delicate and even older than Madu, came also under the influence of the godhead and submitted to a few strokes of the whip.

At last Madu showed signs of exhaustion and his head-long rushes, turned to tottering steps. Going up to each of his whippers in turn he saluted and embraced them, and then he took the whips back into his own hands. Grasping the handles he knelt before the idols; trembling, he began throwing his head jerkingly backwards and forwards. The elders squatted round him, and Kodapa Boji, the young man who had also been possessed, held Bhimana's peacock feathers, like a banner over his head. There was silence. Then Lachu Patel, the village headman, sitting immediately behind Madu, began in an urgent tone and

with rapidly spoken sentences to question the godhead on the prospects for the harvest, the health of the villages and the general run of fortune in the current year. Madu shaking violently, with the bells on the whip handles jingling and jangling, uttered a few broken and incoherent words. The eager crowd pressed closer. Soon the godhead came clear, and the seer's words rang out distinctly, the crops would be good and the cotton, growing well, would fetch only a low price. Bhimana and Rajul Pen would watch over the village, but all the Auwals of the surrounding countryside had let loose the tigers of the forest on men and cattle and an offering for Vagoba, the tiger god was necessary to avert the danger. Five unmarried girls, after bathing, should take the offering to the Vagoba post outside the village near the stream.

The crowd was well satisfied and Madu, the seer, bent his head before the idols. The prophecy had come to an end. After a little the men rose, took up the ritual objects, packed them into baskets, grasped the sacred weapons and formed a procession. Madu, still held the whips in trembling hands, while Kodapa Boju and Soyam Maru carried the peacock feather bunches. Both Madu and Maru were still under the influence of the gods, and swayed so much that men on either side had to hold them upright by both arms as the procession, preceded by boys dancing and brandishing swords, began its pilgrimage, first to the Akū post and then to all the village gods.

The progress of this procession was almost exactly like that of the Persa Pen procession described in Chapter VI. The idols were taken to the houses of Kursenga Madu and Soyam Maru where they received offerings in the courtyards, afterwards entering the kitchens, later

At dawn next morning the two owners of the idols, accompanied by some thirty men and women, took the ritual objects to a stream near Netnur and . . . . . On their return in the late afternoon . . . . . more under the *dondera* tree close to the worship by the women who came one after the other and touched the ground before the idols with their foreheads, many mothers brought their small children and coaxed them into making obeisances. Ultimately the ritual objects were put back into the shrines.

Now all was ready for the main rite—the slaughter of the sacrificial animals. The contributions of millet or gram were heaped before the idols and small quantities of seed grain were, as at the Persa Pen feast, distributed to the worshippers to be consecrated during the common prayer. The testing of the animals and their ultimate slaughter occurred in the usual form, a small part of the livers and the grain was then



offered to the three deities and some morsels were scattered outside the shrines for the Departed. The rest of the night was spent in cooking and eating and as none of the food could be taken to the village, there was sufficient provision for another meal on the following day.

Later, on the morning of the third day, Madu and Maru were once more possessed by their gods; again they submitted to the stroke of the whips. But they seemed tired after the continuous activities of the last three days and the men wielding the whips did not use much force.

The feast ended like most feasts with a procession to the village and the ceremony of solemn fraternization between those who had taken part in the rites.

Pardhans had been present to blow trumpets at many important phases of the ritual, but their role was purely that of musicians; sacred hymns as sung during the Persa Pen feasts had no place in the ceremonies, nor did the Pardhans recite any epic or traditional story on the last evening of the feast. But even so the village had been occupied for almost three days with the worship of gods whose cult is strictly speaking only the responsibility of individual families. The plenty of food in the village made the celebration a joyful occasion for all villagers. In 1943, on the other hand, there was no separate feast; after the bad harvest Kursenga Madu and Soyam Maru were unable to bear the expenses of a dinner for the whole village and performed the rites simultaneously with the Persa Pen feast of the Kanaka people, when there was enough food going round to exonerate them from the obligation of feeding more than a small circle of kinsmen.

As in Marlavai the rites for Bhimana, Rajul Pen and Daul Malkal are performed in Bhawe, so in other villages the feasts in honour of Jangu Bai, Isporal, Boani and various other deities, who may be represented by idols belonging to one or the other of the inhabitants, also fall in this month. Where there is a clan-god in the village, they are usually celebrated some days before the Persa Pen rites which mark the climax of this season of religious festivals.

The proper time for the clan-god feasts, fully described in the preceding chapter, is the full moon of Bhawe, but Gonds seldom keep strictly to the calendar and see little harm in postponing a feast for some days, or even weeks, if the preparations are incomplete or they are otherwise occupied.

Bhawe is also the time for a series of long drawn out rites at the cult centre of Jangu Bai. Gonds from all over the hills, and particularly men of the eight clans of the Sarpe *Saga* devoted to the worship of Jangu Bai, gather at Parandoli, where a cave above a stream serves as the shrine of the great goddess. On the opposite bank of the stream is a collection of *munda* posts and there those men who sacrifice cows in fulfilment of vows erect *munda* as memorials of the rites. Though the main feast is celebrated at full-moon, the coming and going of pil-



other gods worshipped by his family with the prayer:

Plough-share, harrow-blade, sickle, axe,  
we keep at the god's corner; to you  
we give offerings, to us give good  
fortune; to us send prosperity.  
When we go, go before us, when we  
come, come behind us. May all our  
works succeed; give us your blessing.

*Kusa, pas, seter, mars, komla taga  
irmar; niwa dosmar tungmar, mirat  
mak barkat sim, jaijaikar; sonke  
mune, wanche paja. Balbol phate  
kam aiana, daia mani.*

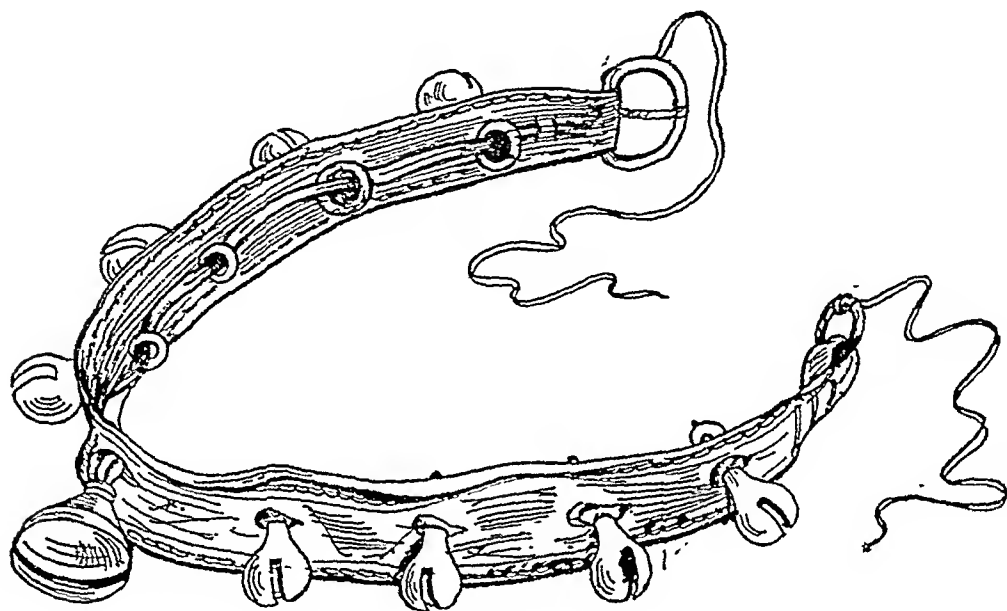


FIG. XVIII. *Leather bullock-halter set with brass-bells.*

Seen in conjunction with the consecration of the agricultural implements, the wearing of the bell-adorned bullock-halters by the young men is significant. During the ploughing at sowing time, but never during the preliminary ploughing in the hot weather, the bullocks wear halters beset with bells and the young men, harnessed with bell-halters, dancing and jumping through the village symbolize the bullocks soon to be needed for the heavy work of ploughing the soil made sticky by the first rains. As the boys, stimulated by the liquor, frisk with exuberant vigour, so the bullocks shall be strong and vivacious. Indeed nothing could be clearer than the magical purpose of the customs performed on that last new moon day before the onset of the rains.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE RAINS

THERE is a feeling of expectancy in a Gond village in the days before the rains break and a sudden feverish activity. The preliminary ploughing may be completed, but the procrastinating jobs still to do—a leak-boos for fences of maize—a bad year, the journeys

to bazaars or merchants in search of seed grain.

The heat only momentarily relieved by spasmodic and violent rain storms still weighs heavily on the land, but the landscape has undergone a remarkable change. The first leaves unfolding have peppered the forest with green and the wooded hills that lacked shape and perspective in the dust brown monotony of the hot months are gradually taking form. Day by day the green patches grow, and growing merge into a fine green mesh as of a net cast over the arid land. Even on the hottest days there is a joyous feeling of spring and from the hill-sides flashes the glorious cassia, falling in golden cascades from slender branches, and the white gardenia blossoming pure and virginal against the saturated green of glossy leaves fills the air with delightful scent.

But all these are only heralds of the luxuriant vegetation bursting forth with the first monsoon rains that begin to fall usually in the first half of June, the Gond month of Bur Bhawe.

The early thunderstorms sweeping across the hills with such violence that they sometimes unroof houses and level to the ground the high bamboo walls of cattle pens are often deceptive and the Gond waits for the slow and steady rain that drifts softly over the hills before entrusting his seed to the earth. For a spell of dry weather after the first showers may well wither the young crops.

#### *The First Sowing*

As soon as the weather is settled, the village elders decide on a day for sowing, a day chosen that none need leave the village at the old times, but requiring some discussion in these modern days when people may have to answer the summons of a court or keep an appointment with an officer or merchant.

On the eve of the First Sowing two rites are necessary to ensure the successful germination of the seed: a sacrifice for the Mother Goddess—either the Mother in whose domain the village lies or, in some localities, for the Village Mother—and a sacrifice for Aki Pen, the guardian deity of the village.

The people of Marlavai invoke the blessing of Kindi Auwal on that day; her sanctuary lies between two hillocks about a mile from the village. In the afternoon of Sowing Eve, with the ground underfoot soft, springy and sweet smelling after a night of rain, seven men and a few small boys took the woodland-path to the shrine of Kindi Auwal. They carried with them one grey chicken, a few brass vessels, provisions and, most important of all, seed-grain tied up in a cloth. Hanu, the youngest of the Kanaka brothers in whose family the village-priesthood is hereditary, was to function as *devari*, but there were also two old men in the party.

There is no shrine at the sanctuary of Kindi Auwal, but between twin hillocks, on the edge of a levelled place, are a few stones about as big as a man's head; to one side are some small clay horses, and to the other three poles with white flags. Discarded leaf-plates showed that men of another village had recently been there for the same purpose.

The first to arrive were several small boys and they began at once to make a fire between some nearby hearth-stones. Then came the young men who had stopped to fill their water pots at a rain pool in the jungle. As each arrived he approached the sanctuary, stood for a few seconds with folded hands before the stones and the horses, bowed down and touched the ground; then turned, and repeated the reverence before the flags. Hanu set about the preparations for the rites: seeds of all kinds were measured with leaf-cups on to one big leaf-plate and placed before the stones on which vermilion powder was sprinkled. Then he drew patterns of vermilion and powdered turmeric, one in front of the large stones and one in front of the flags opposite; he made a small mound of earth on a leaf and on top of the earth burnt incense, waving it twice over each 'altar.' Then all the men and boys formed a semi-circle and Hanu passed the incense along the line and afterwards gave to each a little of the seed-grain, which they held between folded hands, silently praying:<sup>1</sup>

Look Mother, we begin sowing,  
Give us good fortune,  
May the crops be good  
May there be no fear of tiger or  
snake;

*Sura Auwal, wija pisi wantom,  
jaijaikar sim,  
tsokoꝛ panta aiana  
batai dual taras sile were manwa;*

1. Most Gond prayers are said silently, the worshippers not even moving the lips; but by asking afterwards it is usually easy to get the text and there is seldom much disagreement among the informants in regard to the wording; thus we may presume that all worshippers pray in more or less the same manner,

Through jungle and valley we wander  
Keep us safe  
Hands and feet keep safe

*kera kodli uelamar manta*  
*mak tsokot irana,*  
*kai kakk tsokof irana*

At the end of the prayer all prostrated themselves. On the altar in front of the stones, Hanu now made a row of seven small heaps of broken millet with one in front and put the grey fowl through the pecking test—he repeated the procedure at the opposite altar under the flags and finally severed the fowl's head with an upward stroke of the knife, placing it before the millet heaps and throwing the body behind the flag poles.

in stitching leaf plates. When the millet was ready, another pan was put on the fire and the chicken was stewed with oil, chillies turmeric and spices. At the same time a much smaller quantity of millet was boiled in a separate pot. This had been brought from a house in which no woman was menstruating, and it is only this millet which is offered to the Mother Goddess. Kanaka Chinu placed two leaf platters on the altar and heaped them with the 'pure' cooked grain, on each he put a few pieces of roasted chicken's liver. Then Hanu approached the altar alone and taking some millet and morsels of roasted liver crumbled them over the pattern of squares. He then replaced the leaf-plates on the altar and covered them with leaves.

Ultimately all sat down in a line and ate the millet and chicken curry but the liver and the cooked millet that had come from the house in which no woman was impure was eaten by Hanu alone.

The seed grain, standing throughout the rites in front of the altar, was once more measured with leaf-cups and was, to everyone's rejoicing,

seed grain was then tied up in a cloth and that evening distributed among all the villagers.

This rite on Sowing Eve at the shrine or sanctuary of a Mother Goddess associated with the village is called *Wija*, which means literally 'seed' and that same night the rite called *Widri*, is performed at the posts sacred to *Akti*, the village guardian. In Marlavai it resembled in many ways the *Wija* ceremony. It was Kodu, the *devari* him.

—the number appropriate

Earth Mother was placed on the altar. By this rite the earth which has been unclean (*mutu*) since the *Durari* full-moon when the ashes of the Holy fire, interpreted by some as Ravana's ashes, fell upon her, is

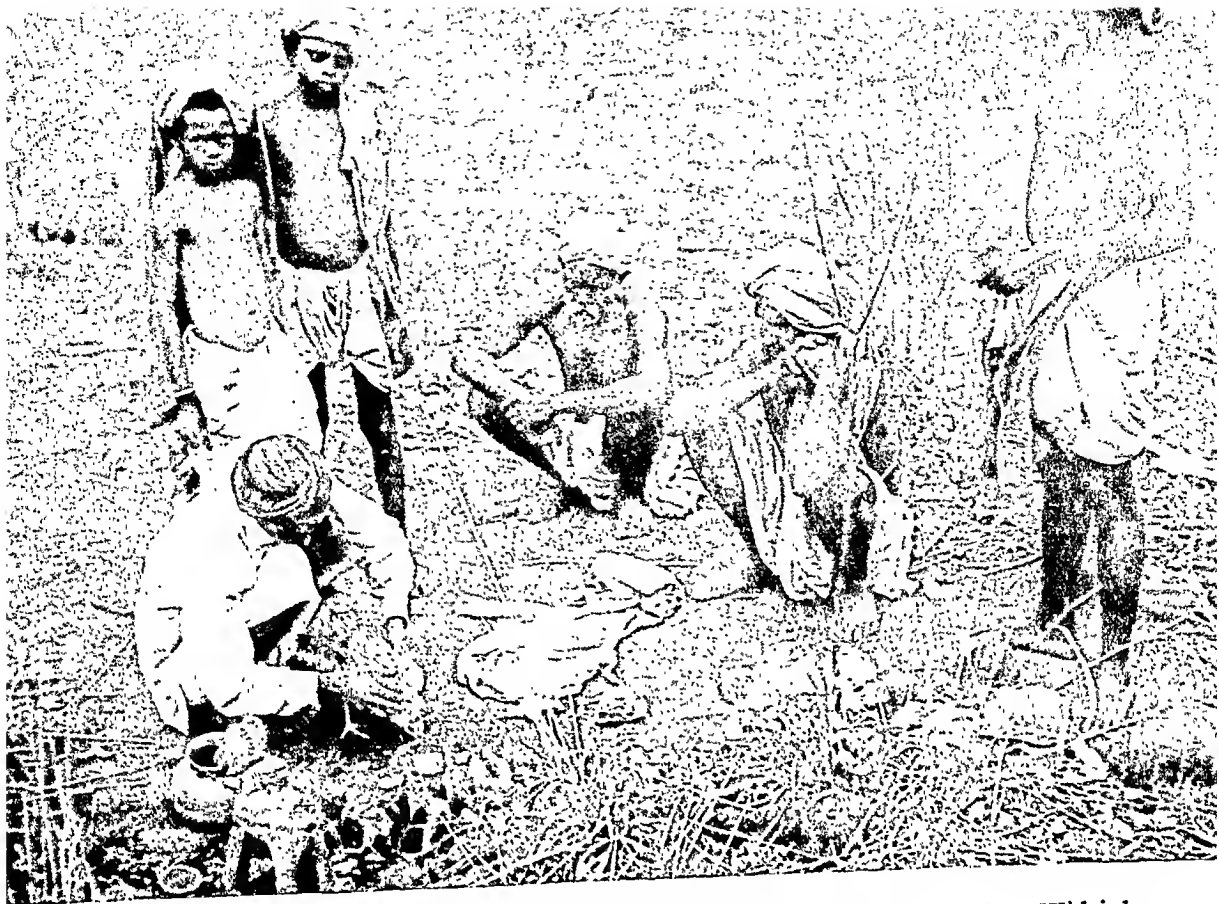


FIG. 61. The *devari* of Marlavai performing the rite for Kindi Auwal on Widri day.

FIG. 62. A family group performing the Mohtur on First Sowing day.





FIG. 63 Husband and wife sowing *jowari* millet.

FIG. 64 Women weeding a field of young maize.





purified and she is then fit to receive the seed. Some of the sacrificial food is also offered to the Village-Mother and the seed-grain is distributed to all the households of the village.

Late in the evening, after the ceremony at the Aki post, the villagers assemble in the headman's house, and there they select six men to perform the vital rites of the night. Among them must be the *devari*, and the two men who impersonated Matral and Matri at the Chenchi Bhimana rite.<sup>1</sup> Two out of these six men clean a measure of jawari millet provided by the headman and grind it on a stone-mill, the first three turns of the mill must be clockwise, but then they may grind in the usual anti-clockwise way. They cook this millet in the headman's house and take it together with an egg-laying hen to the mahua tree sacred to Chenchi Bhimana and the village Persa Pen—a deity not to be confused with the Persa Pen of the individual clans.

At the place sacred to the village Persa Pen the *devari* sacrifices the hen, and the six men cook it and offer some of the liver and meat with the millet brought from the headman's house. Part of the food they eat themselves at the mahua tree and the rest they lay before the gods' shrines where next morning at dawn it is sought out and eaten by the herd boys.

It is still night when the six chosen men collect the leaves of a *kumal* tree, and wrap into each leaf a few grains of the headman's seed jawari, which has been kept separate during the Widri rite at the Aki post. They make as many leaf parcels as there are houses, and then return to the village and with great secrecy put one leaf parcel on every house-roof.

Next morning, when the householders rise, each takes the leaf-parcel from his roof and puts it into his own basket of seed-grain. There he keeps it until the very end of the sowing when he unties the parcel and sows the consecrated millet-seed as the last of his grain to be entrusted to the earth.

Wija and Widri are the preparatory ceremonies of Sowing Eve and Sowing Night, but the actual First Sowing rite in the fields is called Mohtur and is done the next morning by all the villagers on their own fields. Only men whose wives are in their period postpone it until their household is free from pollution.

Soon after sunrise silent groups of people carrying chickens and baskets are to be seen leaving the village. Each householder with his wife, children and other members of the household goes to one of his fields—usually the one near the village where he will grow maize—and evens out a place in the middle for the First Sowing ceremony. There on the bare earth he lays his axe, sickle, ploughing staff and his sowing basket filled with seed. His whole family squats down, the women drawing their cloths tightly over their heads, watching as he lights in-

1. Cf. p. 320.

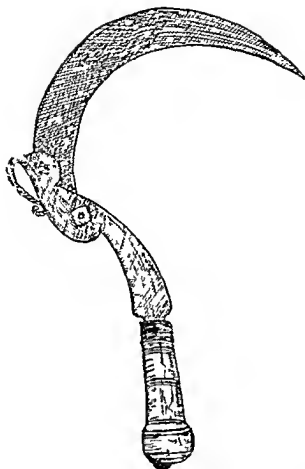


FIG. XIX. Sickle

cense and waves it over implements and seed. Then he pours water  
 over the implements and makes  
 next he takes seed grain of  
 in cupped hands towards  
 at heaps and the rest over  
 the cleared ground before the implements. His wife hands him a  
 white cock and this too he raises to the east and prays

Sisters seven, Earth Mother,  
 Come to our help,  
 Lift your head and look at us,  
 Give us wealth and good fortune

*Selar gerung, Dharti Auaal,  
 mak tsokot saikiri ucara,  
 mak tala sahiti sura,  
 yes barai nim*

After this prayer he raises the cock to his forehead for a moment,  
 then sets it down to peck up the millet. As soon as it has eaten he severs  
 its head with an up-cutting knife and lays it on the altar; the fluttering

body, the blood gushing from the gullet, is held over the altar and the field implements, but no blood is sprinkled on the seed. The householder tears two feathers from the wing of the cock and places them on the altar and then young boys, or if necessary the householder himself, pluck and singe the bird and remove the entrails. The liver is roasted on a small fire, and the householder places it on a leaf-plate with a little cooked millet before the altar.

Now his wife unpacks a basket in which are leaf-plates and the boiled millet she prepared at home early that morning; a little is served to the members of the household, who all wash their hands and eat after setting aside a few crumbs for the departed; but the carcass of the fowl is carefully wrapt up to be eaten at home with the breakfast gruel.

This ceremonial meal over, the children clear away the leaf-plates and the head of the household begins to sow his first seed. He takes up the sowing basket in both hands and standing upright, facing east, silently touches it with his forehead. Then he takes out a handful of seed, holds it to his forehead in silent prayer, invoking once more the blessing of the Earth Mother, and scatters the first seed over the altar, the field implements and the cleared patch of ground, throwing it with an over-hand movement in the manner of broadcasting small millets like *sama*<sup>1</sup> and *bari*.<sup>2</sup> If there is more than one man in the household, each repeats this ritual act. Then comes the turn of the women. They touch the ground before the altar with their foreheads, and they too sow the first seed in the same manner. At last even the small children are prompted to drop a few seed-grains.

Now the seed, which every member of the household, young and old alike, has helped to sow, lies sprinkled thickly over the bare earth and the menfolk take the field implements from the altar, wipe them clean of the sacrificial blood and with knife, sickle and ploughing staff begin scarifying the ground, covering the seed and gently treading down the earth to keep the grains safe from birds and the sudden flood of a monsoon storm. Women lop the branches from any nearby bush—an echo of the time when women had to keep down the young shoots from the stools of newly felled trees in a jungle clearing. The sowing basket with the blessed seed is then carefully packed up and, after deep reverences before the altar place, the family leaves for home.

This solemn and sacred rite of the early morning does not complete the ceremonies of First Sowing Day, and no sooner is the breakfast meal over than the village is astir with gaily clad and excited folk. Young men in clean white *dhoti* and scarlet or purple turbans dress the bullocks in bell-beset leather halters and tasselled head-bands, and yoke them to ploughs; women don their best clothes, often new clothes, and the children jump about happily. For today is a holiday, there is no

1. *Panicum miliare*.

2. *Panicum italicum*.

work to be done, and after the joyous rite of opening the first furrow, there will be games of *tiph*, and in the evening perhaps the song of a Pardhan.

The sun mounting the heavens shines smilingly on hurrying processions ahead the men driving plough and bullocks through the village streets, on and out into the fields, and behind the women carrying on their heads, baskets heavy with seed and ritual accessories

*... bhaktal he is cer-*

Down the  
self a small  
our creamy

bullocks yoked to the ploughs, and last of all comes Madu's wife, as old and as wizened as he himself clad in a new *sari* of flaming orange, on her head a cloth covered basket and tucked under her arm a brass funnelled sowing drill

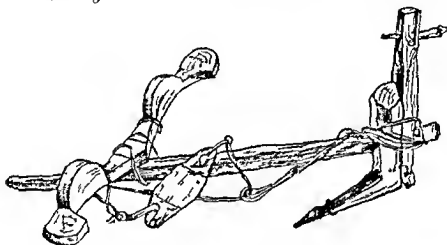


FIG. XX. *Ser*, the narrow shared plough

When they reach the gently sloping field on the opposite side of the valley, the ploughs are driven straight into the shade of a mahua tree standing in the middle of the field, and Madu loses no time in lighting incense and waving it over the implements, between the ploughs,

basket, after first touching  
eastwards. During these  
men sit silently watching

Now Madu takes a leaf cup with sweetened, cooked *dal* and strewing it on the ground before the ploughs, murmurs

Look Cattle Goddess look Earth

Mother

Give us food

Send us wealth and good fortune,

Lift up your head and look on us

*Sura Dhan Lachmi sura Dhartri*  
*Mata*

*mak jawa sim,*

*yes barai sim*

*tala takin sura*

Then he steps back and throws an offering aside for the departed, soliciting their favour:

Look Departed, to you I give sugar-  
dal,  
Sugar-dal I sprinkle.  
May our seeds not stray from our  
fields,  
May they sprout well; be gracious to  
us.

*Sanalir suṛa, nik dari sinton,  
dari waṭanton,  
mawa wauṭal wija beken sonwa,  
tsokoṭ pirana; mak saikiri man.*

The two boys now grasp the handles of the two ploughs, one a narrow-shared (*ser*) and the other a broad-plough (*wakur*), and drive the bullocks forward. For some thirty yards they plough the first furrow, the narrow-shared plough opening the earth and in its wake the broad-plough levelling the earth; then they turn and come back. Madu's wife fills the fold of her *sari* with handfuls of jawari seed, and Madu opens a small leaf-packet with seed consecrated at many feasts and pours it into her lap. Then she harnesses the seed-drill to the narrow-shared plough, and steadying the embossed brass feeder with her left hand, follows the plough, dropping the seed through the funnel; some yards behind her comes the broad-plough covering the seams where the seed lies sown. Madu himself paces briskly up and down in front of the ploughers, broadcasting overarm the pulses. When they have sown a patch roughly square with jawari, Madu's wife changes the seed in the fold of her *sari* and begins dropping pulses on the edges of the field. Therewith ends for this family the ritual First Sowing.

On other fields too women in brilliantly coloured *sari* pace behind ploughs over the damp blackish earth. Many are young wives, sowing with their husbands as described in the Pardhan song of Tsangle Devi and her husband Raja Sirar, who first obtained the jawari-millet for mankind:

At Kalikatiyan, Madanpura village,  
Earth Mother's son Anesirar,  
Dhanekarnal and Jagposidata,<sup>1</sup>  
Ram and Lachmal, the two bullocks,  
Golden sowing plough, diamond seed-  
drill.

Pearl-beset the leading rope;  
Tsangli Devi, his wedded wife,  
Bows to the sowing plough,  
Bows to the earth:  
"Hail, earth mother,  
Give us good fortune,  
May good crops be ours,  
May the cups fill with food by them-  
selves."

*Kalikatiyan Madanpuranagur,  
Bhui Lachmi mari Anesirar  
Dhanekarnal Jagposidata,  
Ram Lachmal, ramṇṇ kondang,  
soneta tipun, hirana jadje*

*motina kasra,  
Tsangla Devi jorita welaṛ,  
tipuntang kalk armaṛ,  
Dhartritang kalk armaṛ,  
"Jahar, Dhartri mata  
mak jaijaikar sim,  
munc mak paṇṭal pik paṇi ai  
dopone jawa taksi wai."*

1. Jagposidata is believed to be the husband of Bhui Lachmi and to send wind and rain; the name means in Marathi literally "the one who feeds the world."

Thus worshipping she grasped the golden-drill,  
 Anesrar drove the sowing plough  
 The golden sowing plough started  
 The golden sowing plough moved  
 As it moved Tsangla Devi sowed  
 In front went the sowing plough  
 Behind sprouted the crops  
 Green grew the field  
 Daily ripened the crops  
 Daily were they harvested,  
 Daily were they threshed  
 Daily were the heaps measured,  
 Sisters seven, the well built granaries  
 In granaries the grain was stored  
 Gifts of grain to all were given  
 All the gods of the world  
 Were fed by Anesrar

*kall arsi sone jadge pimar,*  
*Anesrar tipun hakli kinur*  
*sone tipun takumar,*  
*sone tipun takumar,*  
*takumeke Tsangla Devi jadam,*  
*mune tipun sonmar,*  
*ajane anabai pimar*  
*hirual anta,*  
*din janta pandusantor,*  
*din gurum mufan manta,*  
*din madun takseri manta,*  
*din ran kahamar,*  
*selay yezung gaskhan murasing*  
*murari naga tsantsi kindur,*  
*kia daya dakshan kindur*  
*saua toti deragan kaliang*  
*penkun pou kindur Anesrar*

Husband and wife are indeed the predestined pair for the combined act of sowing with plough and seed drill. No brother and sister, nor any man and woman of the same phratry and consequently standing in a classificatory brother and sister relationship, may ever do the ploughing and sowing together. The Gond sees in the injection of the seed into the earth with the seed drill so close a parallel to the sexual act that the co operation of brother and sister would almost amount to incest. Strangely enough this taboo does not extend to members of different generations, and mother and son may, and often do, sow together.

However, jawari millet is not sown on all fields, and where small millets or oil seeds are to be the first crop, the men alone broadcast the

seeds held below the village. Five ploughmen, all with pairs of pure white bullocks, drew deep brown furrows across the green, grass covered field and before them paced young men leisurely broadcasting small millets. White as the bullocks were the *dhoti* and turbans of most ploughmen, while the women in pink and deep blue *sari* busied themselves like bright birds on the edges of the field, planting *dal* and beans. There was a festive note in the picture, and the brilliant sunshine after a night of rain and the deep blue sky with billowing white clouds heightened all colours—the luscious green of the grass, the rich brown of the newly turned earth and the women's gay clothes. The ploughmen worked with the enthusiasm of the first day, not with the seriousness of the ordinary field work, chatting as they turned the corners and bandying jokes with the sowers. Ploughing was today a ritual act,

and as soon as sufficient ground had been broken and sown to serve as a token, they turned the bullocks homeward and enjoyed the leisure and games of a feast day.

On First Sowing Day no one may leave the village-land before mid-day, and even strangers are asked to stay till then; if necessary they are entertained with a lavish meal to prevent them from leaving. But if their journey is pressing and they refuse to tarry, they must leave behind a ring or some other personal possession, which serves, so to say, as a symbol of their continued presence in the village. The reason for this custom is that on the morning when all rites and prayers are aimed at conjuring up and attracting the forces of fertility and wealth and tying them fast to the village-land, none should leave the village lest he takes in his train part of the precious virtue which causes the crops to prosper. It is an argument based on the same conceptions as the custom of the Angami Nagas that nothing belonging to the First Sower, the village official who initiates the sowing of both millet and rice, may be removed from the village during the whole time between sowing and harvest.<sup>1</sup>

### *Rain Crops.*

Once the ritual First Sowing is over, the Gond devotes his entire energy to giving the monsoon crops a good start. You almost feel that with the Mohtur rite a new current has been switched on and all lassitude and hesitation fall from the people. True the last weeks have not been idle, but much of the work in the hot season and even the feverish activities just before the rains broke were of a rather erratic nature, interrupted on the least provocation. But now life in the village is governed by a different spirit. Everyone is anxious to get on with the sowing, for the first days of the monsoon, when spells of sunshine alternate with rain-showers, are the most valuable for the sprouting crops, and once a period of heavy and sustained rain begins, the best time for sowing is over.<sup>2</sup> As the first grey of dawn streaks across the east, little boys drive the plough-bullocks off to the forest to graze; with the millet straw exhausted, they must have sufficient time to feed on the fresh new grass

1. Cf. C. von Fürer-Haimendorf and J. P. Mills. *The Sacred Founder's kin among the Eastern Angami Nagas*, *Anthropos*, XXXI, 1936, p. 932.

2. Gonds, like other aboriginals, do sometimes miscalculate and miss the best time for certain agricultural activities. It is quite wrong to assume that because they are children of Nature they are particularly well versed in judging the weather. In 1942 the people of Marlavai did the First Sowing on June 26th, compared to June 2nd of 1943, and so late was this that they were caught by a fortnight of almost continual rain before they had completed the sowing. So the sown seeds suffered from water-logging and the sowing on other fields was too long delayed. In 1944, the rains broke late and although the First Sowing rite was performed on June 20th, actual sowing could not begin until the first days of July; but then it began to rain and rained without a break well into August; maize, rice and cotton had been sown immediately after the first showers, but the sowing of jawari-millet was held up for more than a month. An even worse calamity befell the Gonds in 1945, when throughout July and August there was unusually heavy rain. Some cultivators sowed jawari-millet during a break in the rains in the first week of August, but others failed to sow any jawari as a rain-crop.

before starting work. They are brought back to the village between eight and nine o'clock and by that time the ploughmen have eaten and the ploughing and sowing can begin, it lasts with little interruption till about four in the afternoon when the bullocks are once more taken to graze and left in the pastures till long after sunset.

The choice of crops which a Gond sows in the rains depends largely on the kind of soil of his fields and only to a small extent on the tendencies of the market. Gonds distinguish three main types of soil: *patar*, a light stony soil of reddish colour on the flat hill tops, *chelkar*, a light soil also reddish but finer, found in the plains and in hilly country mainly on the gentle slopes, and *lanar*, the black cotton soil, commonly known in the Deccan as *regar*. Of these three types of soil, only the latter can be continuously cultivated without manuring, whereas *patar* and *chelkar* must be allowed considerable periods of fallow. The times are not long past when the Gonds cultivated mainly the light soils and above all the *patar*, shifting their cultivation every three years. They preferred this soil to *regar*, not least because before sowing it needs ploughing only once while black cotton soil must be ploughed three times, on this stony soil they sowed oil seed in the first year, jawari or small millets in the second year and again oil seed in the third year, then they took new land under cultivation. But only very old men remember those days of unrestricted felling which allowed of such a system. Nevertheless, wherever it is possible, they still let the light soils lie fallow for a year or so after a certain period of rotation.

The crops usually sown first and mostly on light soil are *sama*<sup>1</sup> and *bari*,<sup>2</sup> the small millets which are so popular amongst almost all the aboriginals of the Central Indian belt. They have the great advantage of ripening early and even men who possess only one or two fields will set aside a corner for *sama* and *bari*. Both are sown broadcast and as a rule as an unmixed crop. Only occasionally do you see a *sama* field through which a few lines of jawari or pulse have been sown. No *bajra* millet<sup>3</sup> is grown in the hill tracts, but it is a popular crop in the plains of Kinwat and Adilabad, where, on the other hand hardly any *sama* or maize is cultivated.

The only Gond fields which are manured are those lying close to the village, and on these are raised in *lee*, cucumbers, beans and various other garden crops. Every morning the women clear the dung from the cattle sheds and, carrying it in large flat baskets, dump it on these fields whether the crops are standing or have long been reaped.

Whoever is lucky enough to possess such a manured field starts very soon after First Sowing Day ploughing and sowing maize. The husband drives the narrow shared plough, which sears the earth without turn-

1 *Pan cum m'are*

2 *Pan cum tal cum*

3 *Penn setum typhodum*



ing it, and his wife walks two steps behind and drops the seed straight into the furrows; she uses no seed-drill but, carrying the seed in a fold of her *sari*, takes handfuls at a time and lets the grain dribble one by one through the fingers of her down-stretched hand; behind comes a man or a young boy with a broad plough who covers the seed. Even men owning only one pair of plough-bullocks will try to arrange with a friend or relation in a similar position to join forces for the sowing of maize. As soon as the maize is sown, or where several women live in one household, simultaneously with the maize sowing, the seeds of cucumbers, marrows, small beans and other vegetables are broadcast on the same field; this is practically always done by the women, who consider the growing of vegetables as their particular sphere. The manured maize plots are usually very small and many lie on the village-site, in between the houses where they mainly fulfil the function of vegetable gardens, which, while the crops are standing, are protected by post and rail fences of wood and bamboo.

The next crops to be sown are rice and cotton. Rice is raised on heavy black soil, particularly in the hollows which much rain makes swampy. It is entirely rain-fed, the seed is sown dry on the fields and is never grown in nurseries and transplanted.<sup>1</sup> Rice is always sown with the narrow-shared plough and the seed-drill. Though the cultivation of rice on irrigated fields is known to all Gonds—there are rice fields irrigated by tanks at Utnur and in the Godavari valley—they have in Adilabad District made little attempt to adopt this method, and content themselves with rice grown during the rains.<sup>2</sup> The only crops sometimes sown between rows of rice is *purpur*,<sup>3</sup> but most rice-fields are so marshy that no other crop thrives.

Another rain crop sown in *regar* is cotton, which in recent years has assumed an important role as a cash-crop. The Gonds grow mainly short staple cotton which puts up a good resistance to continued heavy rain. Cotton is sown with broad-plough and seed-drill and after every six or seven rows Gonds often introduce one row of a small pulse.

Only when the sowing of small millets, maize, rice, and cotton is completed do the Gonds begin to sow jawari, the great millet, known in Gondi as *jona*.<sup>4</sup> This is nowadays the main crop of the Gonds, and in the rains they sow the yellow variety not only on the black cotton-soil of the valley beds, but on the lighter red soils of the gentle slopes as well as on the stony hill-tops. Jawari is invariably sown with the seed-drill, and consequently never by men; but it is matter of choice whether the narrow shared plough (*ser*) or the broad plough (*wakur*) is used

1. The Gonds never soak the rice-seed so that it may sprout before it is sown.

2. Such comparatively wealthy and progressive Gonds as the Gond Raja at Utnur may own a few irrigated rice-fields, and cultivate them with hired labour, but this does not mean that the growing of wet rice is now an element of the Adilabad Gonds' agriculture.

3. *Phaseolus mungo*.

4. *Sorgum vulgare*.—*Jona* or *zonna* is also the Telugu word for jawari-millet.

for stirring up the earth. The two and three-pronged sowing ploughs (*mogra* and *tipun*) are, however, seldom used for the rain crops, though one does occasionally see a seed-drill harnessed to a two pronged *mogra*, which in this case is used without its upper structure of feeder and bamboo seed tubes. Usually *purpur*<sup>1</sup> or *peshel*,<sup>2</sup> both small pulses, are mixed in a proportion of one to two with *jawari* seed and then both are dropped together in the same furrow. When some ten or twelve rows have been sown the women often take some seed of *tetre*,<sup>3</sup> *jata*<sup>4</sup> or *turi*, all pulses, and sow one line only with that crop. The strip of field between, and including, two such lines is known in Gondi as *wori*.

On the flat tops of the hills above the village the Gonds broadcast *tilli*,<sup>5</sup> which yields the oil mainly used in cooking, and level the earth over the seed with the broad-plough. Sometimes they lay through a field sown with *tilli* a few furrows of *turi*, the pulse commonly known as *tuar-dal*. Another crop raised for the excellent oil that can be extracted from its seed is *churchal*,<sup>7</sup> and this too is broadcast in light soils.

The most essential spice in all Gond cooking is chillies or red pepper, and over the cultivation of chillies the Gonds take almost as much trouble as over their tobacco beds. Chillies<sup>8</sup> are sown near the cattle-sheds on very well manured ground and then transplanted in between rows of maize or on special plots. Similarly brinjals or egg plants<sup>9</sup> are raised in seed plots and later transplanted.

Normally the sowing is completed within two or three weeks from First Sowing Day, but consistent and heavy rain may hold up operations for many a week. While it is raining it is certainly impossible to plough and sow on the heavy and extremely sticky *regar*, it might be possible to plough on the light soil of the hill tops, but the Gonds never do it and during a rainy spell you may find them sitting in their houses, smoking and cursing the bad weather.<sup>10</sup> Only those men and boys whose turn it is to herd the cattle must go out, rain or shine, and they protect themselves by coarse woollen blankets, folded hoodlike over their heads, and large teak-leaf ram hats, carefully stitched together into broad lipped cones (Fig. 66). Strange to say women seldom wear

1 *Phaseolus mungo*

2 *Phaseolus mungo* var. *radialis*

3 *Cymopsis psoraleoides*

4 *Lathyrus sativus*

5 *Cajanus cajan*

6 *Sesamum indicum*

7 *Cassia absinthica*

8 *Capucium frutescens*

9 *Solanum melongena*

10 The only time I ever saw a Gond of Marleva ploughing in the rain was when one man decided rather late to raise a monsoon crop on one of his *chelka* fields. He only started ploughing after First Sowing Day and tried to carry on in rainy weather, one hand grasping the plough and the other holding up a battered umbrella. It was not a success and he soon gave it up.

any protection against the rain; even in the worst seasons I have rarely seen a woman wrapt in a blanket or wearing a proper rain-hat. The most they do is to break a teak-leaf or two and hold them over their heads, but this does not prevent their *sari* being soaked. Yet women have to go out a good deal in the rain. Water must be fetched in any weather and the cow-dung removed from the cattle-sheds and thrown on the maize-plots.

Now, too, is the time when the women and children pick basketfuls of the young herbs and leaves that sprout on ploughed and unploughed fields and, tasting very much like spinach, constitute a most welcome change after the rather monotonous diet of the hot weather. Further variety of diet is provided by various wild-growing fungi and the tubers of the wild yam.<sup>1</sup>

While tradition has it that the Gonds of earlier days grew mainly rain-crops, nowadays a considerable part of the cultivable land is left fallow during the rains and reserved for the cold weather or *rabi*-crops. Once he has finished sowing the Gond uses almost any spell of fair weather to plough the fallow fields so as not to allow the quickly growing grass undisturbed possession. This is done first with the broad-plough, then with the narrow-shared plough, and is mainly the work of very young boys. Thus in the month of Akari you may happen to see belated sowing for the rain-crops and ploughing for the cold weather crops side by side on two adjoining fields.

### *The Akari Rites.*

Bur Bhawe sees the transition from the hot weather to the rains, but Akari, which corresponds to June-July, is the first month belonging entirely to the rainy season.<sup>2</sup> No special ceremony attends the new moon of Akari, nor does it coincide with the opening of any phase in the Gonds' economic activities. Ploughing and sowing continue, unless early rains have allowed all the sowing to be completed in Bur Bhawe, and so does the manuring of the maize plots.

While the crops are still young and comparatively delicate, there are two potential dangers: too much and too little rain. During Akari 1942 there was continuous rain for more than a fortnight and the maize in the water-logged ground began to turn yellow, while the small millets, already more than a foot high, were badly in need of sunshine. In despair the men of Marlavai asked Kursenga Madu, the *bhaktal*, to promise a chicken to Bhimana and Rajul Pen, his family gods, if they would send fine weather. But the gods scorned the offer; and indeed it

1. *Dioscorea belophylla*.

2. In years with thirteen months, the month of Londa is inserted between Bur Bhawe and Akari, but only a minority of Gonds realize that this occurs regularly every three years. In Londa 1942 many Gonds believed that it was already Akari, while others told me that that year there were two Bur Bhawe months. No special ceremonies are connected with Londa, but since the month occurs when Bur Bhawe is very early First Sowing Day may fall in Londa, as it did in 1942.

seemed as if the gods had grown only more indignant, violent storms swept the countryside, clouds surged in great, grey droves over the hills and the rain beat on the saturated earth with never ending fury. Then the young men and boys dried sand inside their houses and ran about the village streets, pelting each other with handfuls, but all to no avail. At last Lachiu Patel and the *bhaktal* invoked all the gods, Sri Shembu, the Earth Mother, Aki Pen, the Kanaka Persa Pen, Ispora, Daul Malkal Bhimana and whatever other deities they could think of, and promised them a great feast with the sacrifice of a goat as well as several chickens. But the weather did not clear and as the gods had earned no reward, the feast never took place.

Between the new moon and the full moon of Akari, the exact time depending on the progress of agricultural operations, two important rites are performed on consecutive days with the object of securing divine protection for the cattle and the herdsmen on their wanderings in the forest.

For the first of the . . .  
and on the path . . .  
who on this occa . . .  
herds, they pray to her to protect the cattle

Look Daturi mother,	<i>Sura Daturi Auuai</i>
May we remain well,	<i>tsokot mandana</i>
May from to-day calves and cows	<i>jiang murang netal tsokot</i>
remain well	<i>mandana,</i>
May feet and arms suffer no hurt	<i>kai kai aua</i>

After the offerings have been given in the usual way, all the cattle are driven into the jungle along this path and over the place of the rite.

While this ceremony may be considered as a ritual sending-off of the cattle to the forest, the next day's rite symbolizes and helps to secure in a magical way the safe return of the animals to the village. It is known as the Akari rite and is done in honour of Polam Rajul,<sup>1</sup> a god holding sway over hills and forests. No work is done on the fields on that day and the cattle instead of being driven to distant pastures are kept in the jungle close to the village. Towards midday all the men and boys of the village go to the forest carrying with them bell beset halters of plough bullocks, plough ropes milk churners used for making  
be in posses  
not of a little  
illage. There

a stone slab under a *dondera tree*,<sup>2</sup> which at the time I watched the rite was only an inconspicuous sapling but had to do because no other tree of this kind was to be found near the traditional place. The

<sup>1</sup> Polam is a Telugu expression for forest, but in this connection it is also used by Gonds.

<sup>2</sup> *Bauhinia racemosa*

ritual preparations, the common prayer and the sacrifice of chickens and goats have few distinctive features. The *devari* of the village functions as priest, and in the prayer before the sacrifice Rajul Pen is addressed by several names, derived from those localities where he is specially worshipped at shrines or hill-top-sanctuaries:

Look, oh lord, Rajul of the forests,  
Debamalla Rajul, Kartewara Rajul,  
Bondkimetta Rajul;

*Sura Maharaja Polam Rajul*  
*Debamalla<sup>1</sup> Rajul, Kartewara<sup>2</sup> Rajul,*  
*Bondkimetta<sup>3</sup> Rajul;*

Cows, calves and bulls

*Mawang muraug, kondang piang*  
*kejate dantang.*

Go to the forest,

*Mehwalir paja mananter,*  
*sura, tsokot sura, pahiti wara*

Herdsmen follow after,  
Look, look well, be gracious to us,

*munetang sarung, pajatang sarung*  
*bara mahinang pahiti man,*

First six, then six,

*kalk armar*

For full twelve months favour us,

This we pray;

*mari miar bal gopal,*

Sons, daughters, children,

*leja kodi danter,*

Go to the forest,

*mak pahiti man;*

Give them your blessing;

*kaija aki dantom,*

For wood and leaves we go,

*taras micho mak diswa,*

May neither snake nor scorpion come  
our way,

*tsokot mandana,*

May we all remain well,

*kai kal wage maina,*

Hand and foot may remain sound,

*ma tsokot situr sauli siana.*

Give us cool shade.

After the sacrifice of the goat and the chickens, a separate offering is given to Gauri Pen, who protects the cattle from tigers. In Marlavai Kursenga Madu, the *bhaktal* and not the village-priest, performs this rite at a stone in the nearby jungle, sacrificing a chicken and every third year a sheep.<sup>4</sup>

When the millet and the curry are cooked, a young man takes one of the sacred spears from the altar, salutes it, and with its point draws a line between the sacrificial place and the foot of the knoll; in his wake, the *devari* drops turmeric powder along the whole length of the line. Messengers are sent to inform the herdsmen, who have kept their herds not far from the scene; with shouts and yells they get the cattle moving and drive them in one great wave through the narrow valley towards the turmeric line. Pursued by yelping dogs and the herd-boys swinging sticks, the cattle stampede, bulls, cows and calves gallop wildly and the crowd begins cheering and shouting as soon as the first animals cross the line. The firing of guns increases the panic; it is considered lucky if some of the terrified cattle run over a man's field, but the same purpose is not served by purposely driving the animals over the young crops. The cattle boys run up the hillock and

1. Debamalla, a hill with a Rajul sanctuary near Seli Harapnur in Utnur Taluq.

2. Kartewara, a village in Both Taluq with a Rajul sanctuary on a nearby hill.

3. Bondkimetta, a hill near Asifabad.

4. In 1943, the chicken would not pick up the grain and Madu promised the god a sheep for the next year; at once the chicken ate and so Lachu Patel decided to take no risks with the whims of the gods and ordered at once one of his sheep to be brought and sacrificed.

standing on the top blow on their great buffalo and ox horns the first blast of the season. Between Sowing Eve and Akari drums and trumpets have been stilled lest the noise should disturb the germinating seed, but from now on the herd boys take their horns when they drive the cattle to graze, using them to keep wild beasts of prey at a distance, to ward off the multitude of spirits that people the forests, and to hurry the herds when there is fear of tiger. The louder the crowd shouts at the Akari rite, the more effectively will lurking dangers be averted from the cattle, the faster the animals run, the better will they elude all perils while grazing and safely reach every evening the shelter of the village.<sup>1</sup>

From the day of the Akari rite, when the milk churners are consecrated cows with young calves may be milked, for with the growing grass cows give more milk, and the calves are no longer entirely dependent on their mothers. There is, at least nowadays, no strict observance of the taboo on the milking of cows before that day, but actually very few Gonds will, although milking buffaloes, milk their cows during the hot weather and the first weeks of the rain, even in a village with hundreds of cows, it is difficult at that time to get a pint of milk.

As soon as the cattle have disappeared, all the menfolk of the village settle down to the feast, the herdsboys eating the *niwot* apart, behind a screen in front of the altar. When the meal is over, and by then it is generally the late afternoon, several young boys assemble in one of the maize fields, preferably that of the *patel*, first a little cooked grain is offered at the altar of the gods.

They lay the glass and weeds before the posts where a temporary altar of vermilion and turmeric powder has been roade by the *devan*. Some food offerings are scattered, and all salute the posts. The idea underlying this ceremony is that as the boys rush through the fields so shall the weeders progress rapidly. No one is supposed to do any weeding before this rite is performed, but this taboo is nowadays not strictly observed.

On the evening of the Akari rites, there is still another ceremony initiating a new phase in the annual cycle, and it is indeed this ceremony which gives the day and the whole month its name. That night whoever possesses a set of Akara drums—and we shall see in the next chapter that only a few men in a village have the hereditary right to such dance drums—lays them out and sacrifices a chicken, sprinkling the blood on the drums. In Marlayai Kanaka Kodu's Akara

<sup>1</sup> The Akari rite obviously corresponds to the Haref festival of the Gonds and Pardhans of the Satpura Mountains in the Central Provinces of S. Hertslet. *The Pardhans of the Upper Nerbada Valley* pp. 119-120.

drums were placed under a shelter before his house, and his younger brother Hanu drew the usual altar-pattern and prayed:

Oh Lord, make it peck, this chicken  
we give you,

Eat of it;

Keep us well for four months,

With the Dandari we will journey,

From us banish all fever and pain,

One month, then will we make your

puja,

Keep us well;

Divine Dundria Raur.

Divine Sipisermalatal,

Keep us well.

*Maharaja kota, nik pori sintom,*

*nime ti;*

*mak nalung mahina tsokoŋ ira,*

*mamoŋ dandari pesi weliantom,*

*mak yerki dukh aiwa,*

*unde mahina niwa puja tungantom,*

*mak tsokoŋ ira;*

*Dundria Raur pen,*

*Sipisermalatal pen,*

*mak tsokoŋ ira.*

A similar rite was performed by the son of Soyam Maru, the only other owner of Akara drums in the village, and then the young men gathered for the first time that year for the singing, drumming and dancing which during the next three months would call them to the place before the *patel's* house on nearly every fine evening. The prayer is addressed to the two legendary brothers Dundria Raur and Sipisermalatal, who are invoked as the initiators of the Dandari dancing (cf. p. 388), but the promise that their *puja* will be performed in one month's time is not to be taken literally. Actually two and a half months are the minimum period which must elapse between the Akari full moon and the beginning of the Dandari time.

#### *Pola and the Rites for the Evil Mothers.*

Akari draws to its end without further ceremony. The monsoon has reached its full strength, but whenever there is a fine day the men plough the fields set aside for the winter crops, and the women hurry to the maize plots and millet fields to free the young plants from the cloying embrace of weeds. Working in small family groups and singing snatches of marriage or dance songs they work with sure fingers round the young stalks. Basket after basket of weeds are thrown to the side, until the glistening leaves of the Indian corn and the low growing vegetables stand alone against the background of dark earth. It is hard work to keep abreast with the rank growth of the weeds, and sometimes young men and boys join the women. Sometimes too the women of two or three households join forces and weed alternatively on each other's fields; and then there are enough women to form the two groups for the proper antiphonal singing of dance-songs:

"How shall I make a living?"

Weeping, asked the blacksmith.

"What work shall I do?"

"How shall I make a living,

"Sri Shembu Mahadeo?"

With his bag slung on his shoulder,

Journeying was Sri Shembu,

*Mawa bahan pismaŋ?*

*aŋantor khati,*

*bata dhanda tungmaŋ,*

*nana bahan pismaŋ,*

*Sri Shembu Mahadeo?*

*seŋate jori watanor Shembu*

*weliser weliser waimar, Shembu,*

To the blacksmith, came Sri Shembu

"Why are you crying blacksmith?"

Uncle what work shall I do?

How shall I make a living  
Shembu?

To you the peasants will come

For them you shall make plough  
share and knife

"Ring and look you shall make,

When these are ready,

Give them to peasants,

For the peasants sowing ploughs and  
share you shall make

To the blacksmith to you all with  
out fail

The peasants will give shares of  
grain,

"That you shall eat!

That work you shall do

The work of plough share and  
knife"

Thence where did Shembu go?

To the carpenter Shembu went

How shall I make a living?"

So spoke the carpenter

How shall I make a living?"

Logs the peasants will bring

These you will carve

Broad plough plough and sowing  
ploughs

You will make and give them

"Then those peasants will give you  
grain

Eating this you will live

Eating grain you will carve"

So they sing on and on the group with the most knowledgeable singer starting each verse, and the clear voices of the young girls repeating it eagerly. Often the women are hidden among the crops, as stooping they pluck out weeds and grass, and only their voices rise from the waving rustling maize. But suddenly the song may cease and heads and shoulders emerge from amongst the glittering leaves, baskets filled with weeds are lifted, carried to the edge of the field and there emptied. But the pause is not long and the song starts again as they bend to their work.

"We will sow the millet,

Thus said the Raja to the Rani

Then the Raja said to the Rani

"Cook the food early in the morning

Then Rani the millet we'll sow

One shall wash the pots,

Another light the fire

*khatinaga uasa lator, Shembu,*

*nime bariye aranti khati?*

*bade dhanda tungmar mamu*

*nana bahan pimar Shembu?*

*kunbur nichigan uanir*

*kusa fask nime tungmar,*

*urte kare tungmar,*

*tungu pimar,*

*kunburk pimar,*

*turburk tipuntang baling tungmar*

*khats nime uatar nizat*

*samdir kunbur nik dana pimar,*

*ade nime tinjere*

*ade lam tungmar*

*kusa fama lam tungmar*

*Agatal boga danur?*

*uade naga danur Shembu,*

*maia pimar bahan?*

*intar uade*

*Alaa pimar bahan?*

*kunbur kastang taranir*

*tana nime tiela*

*uakur naingal tipun*

*mogra tungmar pimar,*

*ur kunbur dana nik pimar*

*aden tinji pimar*

*dana tinji tielmar*

*Marat jona yedlat*

*rajal rani ye indanur,*

*rajal rani indana rajal*

*sakre uakre vandun aiana*

*marat jona yedkat rani*

*bade mati kurei norana*

*bade tarmi masana*



Another cook the grain,  
 Another boil the water,  
 Another shall make the curry,  
 Quickly do the cooking Rani!"  
 The Raja cleaned his mouth,  
 And then he ate his meal  
 The Raja washed his hands,  
 The Raja chewed tobacco,  
 "Rani, make ready the seed,  
 Large grained millet keep ready,  
 White grained millet keep ready."  
 The Rani lifts the seed on her head,  
 A horned goat,  
 The Raja took,  
 The Raja lifts the plough on his  
 shoulder,  
 The rite of the sowing-plough he  
 did  
 The Rani took seed in the fold of her  
 cloth  
 In the fold the Rani took it  
 Obeisance she did to the sowing-  
 plough,  
 Obeisance she did to the Earth.

*bade gafo aṭana,  
 bade yer uhana,  
 bade kusri aṭana,  
 randha urki kiar rani!  
 Todi nora lator rajal,  
 jewi kia lator,  
 kaik rajal kaik nora, lator rajal,  
 tamuk gira tinda lator,  
 rani wija sauri kiar rani,  
 ganari jonata wija sauri kim,  
 lingi jonata wija sauri kim,  
 wija totsā lata rani,  
 kohk wata bakra,  
 rajal pisi wanur,  
 tipun totsā lator rajal,*

*tipunta penk tunga lator,*

*wija woṭite pita, rani,*

*rani woti kiar,  
 rani tipunta kalk aṭar,*

*Lachmi ta kalk aṭar.*

But weeding is not solely woman's responsibility. As soon as the young plants of cotton and jawari are about a foot high, the men drive a special plough, the *daura*, in between the rows; this with its knife-like blade uproots the weeds that would otherwise sap the fertility of the soil and if left to grow would smother the crop. The *daura* is very much like the *wakur*, but its horizontal knife is only about 8" to 10" long; thus it slides easily between the rows of jawari, cotton or pulse without damaging the young plants, while the bullocks walk in the adjoining rows, muzzled with string-bags lest they eat the crops.

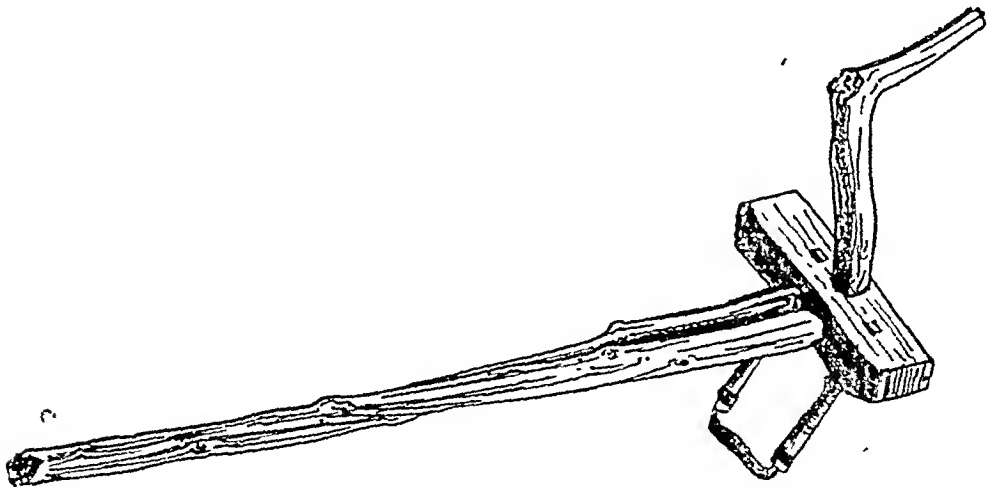


FIG. XXI. *Daura*, the plough used for weeding.

The new moon at the close of Akari and the opening of Pola (July-August) is called Jamur Amas<sup>1</sup> and on the day before the dark moon night all the boys and young men of the village go to the jungle and cut bamboos for stilts (*kodang*, literally horses). Later the herdboys go from house to house and beg millet flour and *dal*, saying the traditional verse:

The gods we will worship, give us	<i>Penk tungantom, urja sim.</i>
grain	
The gods we will worship give us	<i>Penk tungantom, urja sim,</i>
grain,	
We are the herdsmen.	<i>momoj dhorkalir</i>

Taking the provisions with them they drive the cattle to a stone sacred to Chopun Pen, the god of the salt-lick (*chopun*). At Marlavai this stone lies close to a patch of salty clay near a stream, and there the herdsmen sacrifice a chicken, bake bread between dry leaves, and cook *dal* curry. At last they gather all the cattle near the stone and offer Chopun Pen some cooked food and a little freshly drawn milk, prying:

Look oh god, give us your blessing,	<i>Suta Pendi, pahis man,</i>
May the cattle multiply,	<i>uele piang aiana,</i>
May no harm befall feet and hands,	<i>batai kai kal aia,</i>
Once a year one fowl we will give	<i>sale undi gogri nikam,</i>
you,	
May all the others prosper	<i>isokof piang per aiana</i>

After making reverences before both the stone and the cattle, the herdboys blow horns fiercely for a few minutes and then sit down to the meal while the cattle lick the salty clay.

In the evening of the same day, when all the cattle have returned to their sheds, a rite in honour of Dodi Marke, the Mother of the cow-sheds, is performed. The young men of each cattle-owning household take cakes fried in oil, millet flour and milk to the cattle-sheds, and the one acting as priest draws two altar-patterns in vermilion and turmeric powder—one in the doorway and another before a stone near one doorpost. After the usual preparations he sacrifices a fowl and offers the head, the roasted liver, some cakes, cooked mullet and milk in a leaf-cup to Dodi Marke, scatters some food on the ground and throws a few morsels into the cow-shed. The fowl and some mullet are then cooked in front of the cow-shed and after the meal the used leaves with some of the remains are fed to a cow.

As the crops shoot up, the cobs of the maize swell and *sama* bursts into ear, platforms are built on high poles in the centre of the fields. These are thatched, often enclosed on three sides with bamboo wattle-walls, and here with their merry pipes the young men spend the nights, warmed by small fires burning on trays of mud, ever ready to chase off wild pig, monkeys, porcupines and deer. Later when the

<sup>1</sup> Amas is a corruption of the Marathi word *Amavasya*.

grain begins to ripen and swarms of parrots and other birds ravage the grain, watch must be kept both night and day, and in the day-time men, women and children all take turns on the field-platforms.

Men whose fields look particularly promising may now try to ensure a rich harvest by another offering to the Earth Mother. She is one of the few deities who accepts pigs, and some Gonds buy a small pig from Bestas or Waddars and sacrifice it on their fields. There is no definite date for such a sacrifice, nor is it ever done in the name of the whole village-community, but the period when either the rain or the cold weather crop is half grown is the most usual time. There is evidence that even human sacrifices have been used to stimulate the growth of the crops, and in Book II we shall hear of a quite recent attempt to revive this custom.

Several days before the full moon of Pola, but not on any definite date, offerings are given to Siwa Marke, the goddess of the Village Boundary. For now, when the mud is ankle-deep, even on the high ground of the village, and everything is dripping wet, is the time when disease and epidemics threaten and so it is well to propitiate those Mother Goddesses of unpredictable temperament, who are equally capable of bringing or staving off disease. At the first grey of dawn the menfolk of the village, even the very old men, set out carrying with them all sorts of old and broken baskets and winnowing fans, which the night before their wives have put out on the house-roofs. They also take with them a sheep or a goat and a cock and some provisions and repair to the village-border where on the path the *devari* draws with powdered turmeric and vermilion a pattern of four squares, on which he marks seven plus one heaps of ground millet. Holding a little grain between folded palms, all men pray:

Look, lord, Border-Goddess,  
May the village remain well,  
May sons and daughters be free of  
fever and pain.

*Sura ho, Maharaja, Siwa Marke,  
nate tsokoḥ mandana,  
mari miar yerki dukh aiwa.*

A fowl and a sheep (or a goat) are then sacrificed after the usual tests; the sheep's throat is cut, but the head is not completely severed. For the skin of the sheep must be hastily stuffed with leaves and suspended from the branch of a nearby mahua tree, so as to hang head downwards over the path. Most of the old baskets are thrown away, but one or two are hung up on the same tree. The meat and some millet are cooked, first offered to Siwa Marke and then eaten by those present. Nothing of this food must be taken back to the village and the women have thus no share in the feast. The stuffed carcass and the old baskets remain at the village boundary until they disintegrate; whenever you come on such an odd collection on and below a tree, you know that you are approaching a village.

Why just at this rite the skin of the sacrificial animal should be

hung up at the scene of the ceremony is not quite clear. Perhaps the stuffed skin of sheep or goat is intended to serve as a permanent offering, so that any stray disease spirit or Auwal may feed on it when approaching the village and being satisfied pass on without paying the village an unwelcome visit. In the old times say the Gonds, 'we hung up large gourds or pots of mahua liquor at the approaches to the village and smaller gourds above all house doors. When the spirits and Auwal came they drank of the liquor and left us alone. But now we are forbidden to make liquor and we have none to keep off the Auwal and so many diseases come to our villages and many people die.'

A sidelight on the Gond's attitude towards the Seven Mothers or Auwal whom he propitiates on so many occasions is thrown by a prayer to Shembu Pen during a ceremony also performed in the month of Pola either before or after full moon. The ceremony is called Shembuku Aradin or Bhagawan's meal, and provisions such as jawari millet, *dal*, rice, wheat flour, ghee and tamarind are collected by public subscription and cooked in the open near the stones representing Hanuman and the Nandi.<sup>1</sup> The village headman in offering a small quantity of this food begs for protection from all sorts of dangerous influences.

Six months in future  
Six months in the past  
In all twelve months  
God Shembu keep us well  
No ghost shall harm us  
No devil shall harm us  
No mother shall harm us  
Keep us all well  
You are our guardian  
Oh lord your feet we touch

*Sarung mahinang munetang*  
*sarung mah neng fajetang*  
*bara mahinang*  
*Shembu Pen mak tsokot ira*  
*mak bhut laga*  
*mak sai an laga*  
*mak Auwal laga*  
*Mak tsokot ira*  
*mak n me pmendari*  
*Maharaja nik kalk arantom*

The mentioning of Auwal in one breath with evil spirits and demons is certainly significant, and demonstrates the Gond's view of the Mother Goddesses better perhaps than the anxious and humble prayers addressed to the Mother Goddesses themselves.

During the month of Pola boys and young men amuse themselves by walking on stilts, these are made of bamboo with foot rests consisting of two short slats slit at the ends which are clamped round the up right above an internode, and are there firmly lashed. The stilt walkers place their feet along the foot rest, and grasp the stilt upright firmly with the toes. young boys are often very clever in walking briskly or even galloping on their stilts but except for an occasional tussle I have never seen any competition or race of stilt walkers.

The significance of the stilts is obscure. Stilt walking in Pola or a month corresponding to it is a practice wide spread among aboriginal

<sup>1</sup> The quantities of food cooked at such a feast for the population of one village may be of some interest. In 1942 the following provisions were contributed: a Ma-lava 18 seers of jawari, 6 seers of *dal*, 1 seer of rice, some wheat flour, 1 basket of tamarinds, and 2 seers of ghee.

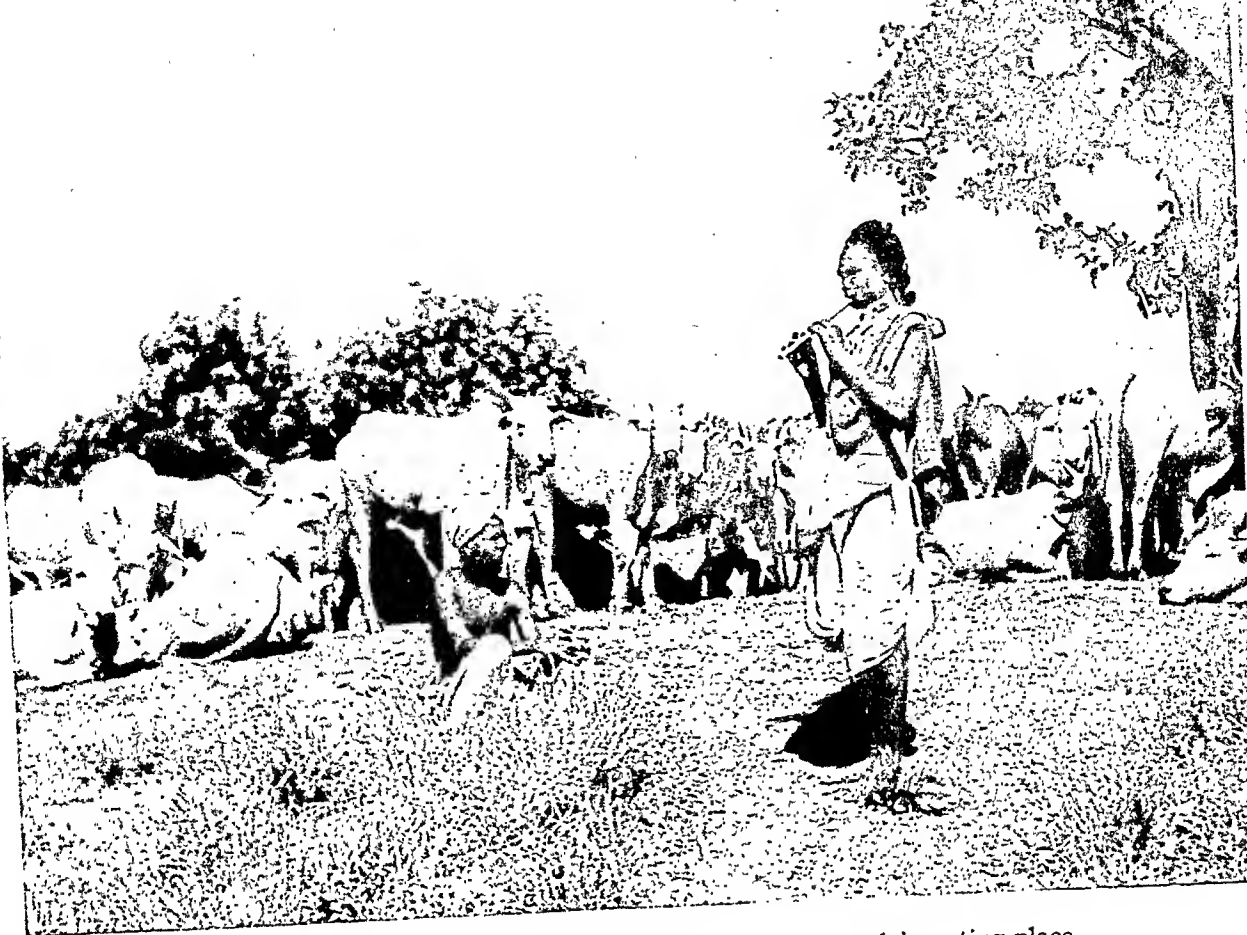


FIG. 65. Herdsboys playing the flute at the cattle's resting place.

FIG. 66. Herdsmen wearing rain-hats made of teak leaves.





FIG. 67 Stilt walking in the month of Pola

FIG. 68 A boy leaping at the Pola rite



and some non-aboriginal rural populations of the Central Provinces and Bastar.<sup>1</sup>

On the full-moon day of Pola, the Gonds, in conformity with the practice of many Hindu castes, perform the Nagalpanch rites, the propitiation of cobras. But the simple ceremony is given a Gond turning by the invocation of Nagoba, the god of Keslapur, the important clan-centre of the Mesram *pari*, where Sri Shek, the cobra-god, who carries the world on his head, is annually worshipped at a great festival. On the day of Nagalpanch, the men go to a white-ants' heap—frequently the home of snakes—and pour some milk and broken eggs into one of the holes. While doing this they pray:

Nagoba, you are the god of Keslapur,  
Nagoba, keep us well,  
May sons and daughters prosper,  
May crops and fruits prosper.

*Nagoba, Keslapurati pendi andi,  
Nagoba, mak tsokoṭ mandana,  
mari miaṭ tsokoṭ mandana,  
paṇṭa palam tsokoṭ mandana.*

The same evening the women make bread and cakes, clean the house and offer some food to Nagoba.

The Pola feast, observed alike by Gonds and Hindus, is celebrated on the dark moon night at the end of the month. The people of Marlavai performed on that day two ceremonies: one at the Hanuman and Shiva idols of the deserted village of Ragapur and one, at night, before the Hanuman stone under the banyan tree in their own village.

Soon after midday the young men and boys who usually tend the cattle set out for Ragapur, where a stone-platform bears a tall Hanuman relief, a Nandi, a Ganesha, a *lingam* and several other carved stone figures. The boys knew little of the significance of these stones and considered them as collective symbols for Shembu Pen. As soon as they arrived they set to work cooking, mixed millet-flour and water to a thick dough and baked flat cakes between leaves in glowing ashes, the leaves lending the dough firmness until it hardened sufficiently to be turned. One young man made a ball, about the size of a football, from wheat-flour, sugar and ghee, and other boys cooked rice in sugared milk, when all the food was ready, one of the Kanaka brothers smeared the idol stones with vermilion powder dissolved in ghee, placed some small scraps of the food in leaf-cups before the idols and broke a coconut, allowing the milk to run over the images.

1. In his article 'Stilt-walking among the Murias of Bastar State' (*Man*, Vol. XLIV, 1944, No. 28) Verrier Elwin quotes several Muria legends which explain the custom of walking on stilts for two months during the rains. According to one story the first stilts were made for Bhimul by his mother Gorondi, and it is, therefore, that the village boys pile up their stilts over the stone of his mother Gorondi, and it is, therefore, that the village boys make the stilts at the *Amavas Pandum* early in the rains, Gorondi and give her offerings; the Murias make the stilts at the *Amavas Pandum* ceremony, when the stilts are thrown away and the boys use them until the first 'New Eating' ceremony, when the stilts are thrown away outside the village near a stone sacred to Bhimul Pen. Dito Pen or Gorondi Muthai, Elwin suggests that the practice of stilt-walking may aim at encouraging by sympathetic magic the growth of the crops. There is an obvious parallel between Gorondi Muthai and Siwa Marke, at whose seat near the village boundary the Adilabad Gonds discard the stilts on the morning after the new moon of Pola (Cf. p. 357).

Then the entire cattle of the village was driven twice round the stone altar and the young men standing on the platform sprinkled them with water and cooked rice. At last the herd boys sat down in a semi-circle and ate the food with the cattle standing behind them, waiting to lick the leaf plates. The entire ceremony is most rites concerned with cattle was performed by the young men and boys, there was not a man over thirty in the party. The stone images sacred to Shembu Pen at Ragapur had been chosen because the place round the idols under the Marlaian banyan tree did not lend itself to such a ceremony, particularly at that time of the year when the fenced in maize plots narrowed every open space within the village.

Yet the proper Pola rite was still to take place. In the evening just after nightfall drumming sounded through the village. From the headman's house a procession with torches moved to the banyan tree. Lachu Patel's eldest wife carried a brass vessel in which burnt a light and another woman of his house a brass plate with uncooked rice, sugared *dal*, vermilion powder, ghee and other ritual requisites. Nearly all the village folk made up the procession and behind them young men led plough bullocks in pairs, each decorated with tassels, their horns painted and some even ornamented with coloured paper. Large single membranous drums thundered and the men shouted.

*Hara hara, Mahadeo*

Arr also had a

Lachu Patel's house in  
vermillion paste Lachu

sugar and ghee over the stones, and broke a coconut, maudibly he  
praved

Shembu Mahadeo

Give us your help

Your sons and daughters we are.

Keep us well

Calves cows & bulls keep well

*Shembu Mahadeo*

mak to'ot saikirim man.

and more mar andom

maaf trokot ing

pang murang kondang tsokot mam

Kanaka Motu, though only a newcomer to the village, yet considered the next most important of the village, repeated the offering, and all the time women and children happily chattering crowded in on the altar, and the bullocks were led round and round the tree. The difference in atmosphere between this rite and the Persa Pen feast is striking. During the rites for the clan deities deep awe and reverence hold the worshippers, but the Pola festival is the joyous though by no means irreverent performance of a charade.



Family by family the villagers came forward out of the shadows into the flickering light of torches. One by one each householder stooped to pay reverence to Shembu Pen, then raised his coconut high over his head and brought it smashing down on one of the giant roots of the tree, spilling the milk and taking home the shell. Young men of Lachu Patel's house broke up the coconut and mixing it together with sugar on a huge brass tray, distributed it among the crowd so that all received a little.

When all had placed their offerings on the altar, the crowd and the bullocks returned to the house of Lachu Patel. Outside in the village street one of his sons-in-law drew two patterns of turmeric powder on the ground in front of a line of Lachu Patel's bullocks, and one pair was made to turn on top of each pattern. His youngest daughter then brought from the house a plate on which a small lamp burnt amidst heaps of rice and sugared *dal*. First Lachu Patel and then the women saluted the bullocks pair by pair, sprinkled them with water, rice and *dal*, saying:

Food we offer.

Bhaswan Nandi

Bhagawanta look upon us with favour.

*Gafo dosantom,*

*Bhaswan Nandi,*

*Bhagawanta tsokoſ suſa mak.*

Then each bullock was fed from a winnowing fan with sugared *dal*. Most of those present then went off to their own houses where they repeated this ceremony with their own bullocks; back in their stalls, the bullocks received salt and other special food, while the people went to their houses and feasted on millet-bread, cakes fried in ghee or oil, and sweetmeats.

At dawn next morning all men and boys gathered and shouldering their bamboo stilts set out in single file for Siwa-bori, the village boundary. Swinging their stilts and hitting every house post and tree as they passed, they drove before them all diseases, sorcerers and evil spirits with loud shouts of:

Off with you! Disease and illness  
take with you!

Wizards, demons, off with you!

*Jage, jage aſa piſa gheun jage*

*sode rakhshal jage.*

When they reached the mahua tree where the stuffed skin of the sheep sacrificed to Siwa Markē still dangled above the path, they walked round it in a closed circle, three times, threw their stilts against the trunk and, without formality scattered some cooked food under the tree. This rite is called *Bargā* which means literally "staff." Having thus rid themselves of their stilts, they re-crossed a small stream. On the opposite bank a blanket was spread on the green grass and on this was now heaped all the food contributed by every man and boy present; some had brought great balls of rice and delicious sweetened cakes fried in ghee, others only a little cooked millet; but the contributions were shared out in exactly equal parts; even the cakes that remained after

the first round were broken in as many pieces as there were men and boys present

The meal was soon finished and on their homeward way the young boys searched the woods for as many different kinds of leaves and flowers as they could find; they plucked the high blue candles of the *bhamakur* flower and the purple rods of the wild foxglove, scrambled for yellow daisies, climbed trees to break sprays of *Bauhinia Vahlia* and threw sticks at the inaccessible blossoms of teak trees. This motley collection of branches and flowers they carried home and tied up under the eaves of their houses, when in the following months a child is ill or cries a great deal, a few of the leaves and flowers are scorched and the child is made to inhale the smoke.

There is a story about the origin of Siwa Auwal which throws a light on the Durari rite at the beginning of the hot weather and the two ceremonies at the village boundary during Pola.

When all the twelve crores of Gond gods lived together in Dhane-gaon they began in the month of Akari to practise Dandari singing, dancing and playing drums. All through the months of Pola and Akurpok they sang and danced every fine night. And when it came to Dassera they deliberated where to go and dance. Finally they decided to visit Jambu Guru, who lived in Jambu Dip. He received them hospitably, washed their feet, marked their foreheads with vermilion and offered them tobacco and betel.

Now Jambu Guru had a daughter, named Damkal Turju; and she, although already mature, wore no clothes. So when the Gond gods came dancing Jambu Guru ordered her to stay inside the house and grind millet for the meal which he would set before his guests.

In the courtyard of Jambu Guru's house the Gond gods began to sing and dance and drum, and Damkal Turju, watching through a crack in the wall was possessed by a great desire to join them. Naked as she was, she ran out and began to dance. Seeing her dancing with the Gond gods her father was overcome with shame and he hid his face in his hands. The Gond gods too were much shamed and they all ran away, but Damkal Turju ran after them. On and on they ran till they came to Shembu Pen's court, the Gond gods passed by, but Damkal Turju boldly entered. When Shembu Pen looked on her nakedness he was also ashamed and resting his elbows on his knees covered his eyes with his hands. So he sat, but Damkal Turju came close to him and said: "Give me the Gegra flower, and I will leave you alone." But Shembu Pen knew nothing of the Gegra flower nor did any of the gods in his court; they all sat silently in shame, their elbows on their knees and their hands before their eyes. Then Shembu Pen sent for his wife Girjal Parvati; she came with a stick and beat Damkal Turju abusing her for standing naked in the assembly of gods. Damkal Turju ignored the abuse and the beating and

asked Parvati for the Gegra flower; now that goddess Girjal Parvati knew all about the Gegra flower, but she was loath to tell Damkal Turju, and she bade the girl go to Warnawati and ask Dharma Raja.

So Damkal Turju went to the court-house of Dharma Raja and there she found him sitting in the midst of many gods. There too all were shamed looking on her nakedness and all hid their faces. Dharma Raja too implored her to go away, but she only came closer, and asked him for the Gegra flower. At a loss what to do Dharma Raja sent a message to his wife Durpati and she came with a big stick and gave Damkal Turju a far worse beating than Parvati. "You bitch, you whore, you daughter of an incestuous mother, get out at once," she shouted, and Damkal Turju ran off crying and weeping, for she was very sore after so much beating. She was so miserable that when she came to the river at the village boundary, she gathered a great pile of wood, set fire to it and climbed up, intending to burn herself.

The black smoke from the pyre rose high in the sky, and Arjuna, hunting many miles away and seeing the smoke, thought that Warnawati was on fire. So he took the fire-powder from his gun, and loaded it with water-powder. Then he aimed at the smoke, and hit it right in the middle. There was a terrific roll as of thunder, water poured down, the fire was extinguished, and Damkal Turju sat shivering on the pyre. And Arjuna, hurrying home to find out what had been happening in Warnawati, came to the village-boundary, and found there a woman all huddled up, sitting on a pile of wood and crying *hu-hu-hu*.

"Heh, grandmother!" he shouted, for he could not see properly who it was, "what are you doing here?"—"Oh, I can't hear well, I am old and deaf, come nearer son."—Arjuna went nearer and shouted again, but Damkal Turju still pretended not to hear. In this way she drew him nearer and nearer till he stood immediately behind her. Then suddenly she turned and caught him round the neck; and struggle as he would he could not free himself of her embrace. "Give me the Gegra flower and I will let you go," was her only answer to his curses. He threw her here and threw her there and hit her with his hands, but she clung to his back, her arms locked round his neck. Do what he would he could not get rid of her, and at last he dragged her to Dharma Raja's court-house, where all the gods showered him with abuse for coming home with a naked girl on his back. "Go," they said, "even if you die in a distant land, who cares?"

Thus Arjuna left Warnawati and wandered for a long time carrying Damkal Turju on his back. At last he came to a place thickly overgrown with spear-grass. There he sat down and said: "Let me go. I will descend to Sri Shek who lives in Pata Dip and from

him I will get the Gegra flower. You stay here." With this Damkal Turju was content, and she unclasped her hands from about his neck and let him go. Now Arjuna began uprooting the spear-grass, underneath was the entrance to a deep cave and down into this cave went Arjuna. But Damkal Turju waited among the spear-grass.

For twelve days Arjuna walked through Pata Dip and at last, coming to a garden with mangoes and many other beautiful fruit trees, he sat down and rested. After a while Sri Shek's daughter came to tend the garden and seeing Arjuna, asked him: "Who are you? Whence have you come?"—"I am Arjuna and I have come to find the Gegra flower."—"Why have you come here for the Gegra flower? Who told you that it is here in Pata Dip?"—Nevertheless she allowed Arjuna to go with her to her house and there he stayed with Sri Shek's beautiful daughter.

Many days passed before Sri Shek's daughter told Arjuna of the Gegra flower, but at last she advised him to take his wind-gun—neither the fire gun nor the water gun but the wind gun—and to aim at Sri Shek's turban. For this, as Arjuna well knew, was the Gegra flower. "If you hit it," said Sri Shek's daughter, "it will fall off and you will be able to pick it up." But don't give it to Damkal Turju, take it to Dharma Raja's court."

Arjuna did as Sri Shek's daughter had said, and he hit the Gegra flower with his wind gun. It rolled off, and Sri Shek being a cobra and having no hands could not pick it up without upsetting the world, which he carries on his head. Then Arjuna took the Gegra flower and put it in his pocket.

He bade farewell to Sri Shek's daughter, and returned to the Upper World. Among the spear-grass he found Damkal Turju still waiting, but he did not mean to give up the flower and when she asked for it, he answered: "I'll give it to you when we get home."—"No, no. At least show it to me," she protested and grasping his hand, would not let it go. So he took the flower from her pocket and

Now Bhuma, the other was planted on the next hill. Arjuna, the other was planted on the next hill. Now Bhuma, Arjuna's elder brother, whose stomach is never filled, was at that time in the forest eating roots and wild fruit.

boundary he ordered her to stay for six months, but during the next six months he decreed she might come to the village: on Durari day she should be called to the village and receive offerings of bread and cooked food, but on Pola day she should be sent back to the village-border, there to receive offerings of goat, sheep or chicken together with all the old baskets. So it is that to-day Damkal Turju remains from Pola to Durari in the village and that she is now called Siwa Marke or Siwa Auwal, the Mother of the Village-Boundary.

Though too much importance need not be attributed to this myth, which may represent a comparatively late explanation of Durari Auwal and Siwa Auwal, it offers the possibility of interpreting the rites at Durari and Pola in a manner compatible with the Gonds' general attitude towards the Mother Goddesses. Durari Auwal and Siwa Auwal may be two aspects of a deity whose powerful influence is beneficial to the fertility of the crops, and yet, as that of many of the bloodthirsty and easily offended Mother Deities of India, potentially dangerous to man. In the hot season and the early part of the rains, when the Gonds' health is generally good and there is little danger from malaria or dysentery, they are prepared to risk the presence of the deity in the village in order to draw her beneficent influence to the newly ploughed soil, the sown seed and the sprouting grain. But when the season of epidemics and fever comes—and malaria is always bad at the end of the rains and in the first part of the cold weather—they banish her again to the village-boundary.

### *The Eating of the First Fruits.*

Akurpok, the month corresponding to August-September, finds all the rain-crops swelling into ear and the vegetables ripening in the garden-plots. The watching of the crops and the ploughing of the fields for the second sowing are now the main occupations of the men, while the women are busy weeding. As a rule the height of the rainy season is past and though heavy showers still occasionally break over the land and on low ground you may sink up to your knees in the soft mud, there are longer spells of sunny weather and in the early morning thin white mist rises from the damp earth.

The vegetable plots now promise many an attractive meal, but neither the bright green cucumbers creeping along the ground, nor the bulging golden marrows may yet be touched. First the Nowon, the ritual First Eating of the new crops must be performed and the boys assembling at night round fires in the village piazza with *para* and *gumela* drums comfort themselves with songs enumerating all the delicious vegetables in the forbidden gardens:

In the garden what vegetable grows?  
In the gardens cucumbers grow.

*Bagsai waṛite, batata weli?*  
*Bagsai waṛite kubreta weli,*

In the garden what vegetable grows?  
 In the garden sweet melons grow  
 In the garden what vegetable grows?  
 In the garden black egg plants grow  
 In the garden what vegetable grows?  
 In the garden climbing beans grow  
 In the garden what vegetable grows?  
 In the garden dwarf cucumbers grow  
 In the garden what vegetable grows?  
 In the garden gourd plants grow  
 In the garden what vegetable grows?  
 In the garden round marrows grow  
 In the garden what vegetable grows?  
 In the garden turai creeper grows  
 In the garden what vegetable grows?  
 In the garden small lentil grow  
 In the garden what vegetable grows?  
 In the garden green lentil grow  
 In the garden what vegetable grows?  
 In the garden brown lentils grow  
 In the garden what vegetable grows?  
 In the garden sweet peas grow

*Bagsai uarite, batata ueli?*  
*Bagsai uarite, terua ueli*  
*Bagsai uarite, batata ueli?*  
*Bagsai uarite, kaniat sapa*  
*Bagsai uarite, batata ueli?*  
*Bagsai uarite, kori sengana*  
*Bagsai uarite, batata ueli?*  
*Bagsai uarite, bodela ueli*  
*Bagsai uarite, batata ueli?*  
*Bagsai uarite, purkata ueli*  
*Bagsai uarite, batata ueli?*  
*Bagsai uarite, kohreta ueli*  
*Bagsai uarite, batata ueli?*  
*Bagsai uarite, tokhata ueli*  
*Bagsai uarite, batata ueli?*  
*Bagsai uarite, jatana ueli*  
*Bagsai uarite, batata ueli?*  
*Bagsai uarite, thetrena ueli*  
*Bagsai uarite, batata ueli?*  
*Bagsai uarite, beselna ueli*  
*Bagsai uarite, batata ueli?*  
*Bagsai uarite, uafena ueli*

All these vegetables ripen now under the eyes of the villagers, but woe to him who rubbles even a raw cucumber—favourite delicacy of old and young—before the eating of the first fruits takes place. A breach of custom would meet with speedy retribution, tigers would come and slay both men and cattle.

The Nowon, the offerings of the first *sama* ears and early vegetables and the subsequent ceremonial eating of the new crop, is therefore an important event, an event that closes a definite period of the year and opens the pleasant time when food, often scarce through the later part of the rains, becomes suddenly plentiful.

The Gond calendar provides no fixed date for the Nowon, which may be held as soon as the small millets ripen. In some years it is performed before Pola and in others after, but there is no definite correlation of the ancient Gond rite of the Nowon and the Hindu festival of Pola. Unforeseeable circumstances such as the prevalence of disease in a village, may be the cause of postponing the ceremony for some short time, but never for very long. When the men of a village have decided on a day, all except those debarred from any ritual act by their wives' menstrual period, perform the rites on their fields on the same evening. The offering and eating of the first fruits is one of the few occasions when both clans and phratries manifest themselves as social units. The members of each clan represented at the . . .

*sama* is cooked and eaten, it is not only the clan members who assemble for the ritual meal, but the men of all the clans that form one phratry

or sub-phratry. Thus all men of seven-brother clans foregather in one house and the men of four-brother clans in another, but both the six- and the five-brother phratries are divided into two sub-sections, and the clans belonging to each of these eat their new grain-separately. The example of a Nowon in Marlavai will show how this system actually works.

In 1942 Marlavai was late with the Nowon, for a spell of dysentery, affecting many families, had turned the people's minds from celebrations. So it was not until the 20th September when many of the garden vegetables were already fully ripe and the children cast longing eyes on the cucumbers, yellowing before their eyes, that the rite was at last performed. Though most families hold it on the same evening, it is not one of the community-feasts when all the villagers assemble in any one place.

Yet the village-deities had to be propitiated, and in the late afternoon Kanaka Hanu and Jangu, the two younger brothers of the *devari*, went first to Aki Pen, where they sprinkled water, burnt incense, made an altar of the new *sama* and scattered ghee and *dal*, then they went to the Village Auwal and the Podi Auwal, and at each place they performed the same simple ceremony. As it grew dark, they joined the rest of the Kanaka men at the shrines of the Persa Pen and the Mora Auwal, where their clansmen were already engaged in the preparations for the first fruit offerings. The Kanaka people are the only men in the village whose clan-god is at Marlavai, and so they perform at the Persa Pen shrine what the men of other clans perform in the name of their clan-deities in their fields. In the Persa Pen shrine Kanaka Lachu, the *kaṭora* made two sets of *sama* heaps: five heaps of new *sama* plus a sixth in front for the Persa Pen on the right, and on the left, eight heaps of new *sama* plus a ninth for the *sati*, the divine ancestors. In the nearby shrine of Mora Auwal, a Kanaka family deity, Kanaka Badu performed a slightly more elaborate ceremony, dealing out grain which was then consecrated in the usual semi-circle; then he made five plus one heaps before a carved baton sacred to Bhimana, eight plus one heaps before two clay-horses and a pot sacred to Jangu Bai, eight plus one before an incense-vessel and two lumps of hardened vermilion paste representing Motagudem Auwal. Then he scattered some new *sama* outside the shrine for the Departed. A quantity of new *sama* was cooked on a fire close to the shrine, and here all the Kanaka men ate the first grain of the new harvest after offering some small shares to the Persa Pen, the *sati* and Motagudem Auwal.

All the other clans followed a different procedure. The men and boys of Atram clan gathered in the middle of a maize field belonging to Atram Lachu, the *patel*. In between the high stalks, rustling in a strong wind, Lachu Patel cleared a patch of weeds and on the ground Jangu, a member of a *kaṭora* family, made two small longish mounds of cow-dung. A clansman broke a few maize cobs, some beans and

some small cucumbers, and produced several *sama* ears brought from another field. Jangu, the *katora*, burnt some incense, dropped on it some newly threshed *sama* grains and then distributed some of the *sama* to all men and boys present. Holding the new *sama* between folded hands, they stood in a semi circle and prayed:

We are eating the new food  
Grant us good health  
Look Great God look God of our house  
Grant us your favour  
Look, give us health and happiness!  
Oh! Village Mother the food offer-

ed to you we eat  
Look Rajul to you we offer  
Look ancestors this is for you!

*Mamot puna tindi tintom,  
mak tsokot barbat siana  
sura Persa Pendi Rota Pendi sura,  
pahu man  
Sura tsokot, mak jajakar siana  
Vat Anul niku widurku tintom,*

*Sura Rajul rik jecana  
Sura satik andit*

Then they bowed down to the ground and after that Jangu made on each of the men a little from little

present, from two small boys of six and seven to Lachu Patel well over sixty. The farewell reverences were hastened by an approaching rain storm and the ceremony was hardly over when all had to rush for the safety of the houses.

Simultaneously other clans had performed more or less identical rites in the field of a clan member, but not all offered vegetables as well as *sama*. The first fruit offerings of the *sama* and the fact that the headman had offered vegetables in his field threw open all vegetable gardens and all varieties of garden crops.

By nightfall the offering of the first fruits to the Persa Pen and *sati* was over, the ritual eating of the new grain had still to take place. For this the people gathered according to phratries and sub phratries, in Atram Lachu the headman's house ate the members of the Pandwen *Saga*, i.e., men of Atram, Geram, and Torosam clan, while the members of the Sarpe *Saga* the other subdivision of the six brother phratry held their first eating next evening in the house of Tumram Lingu,<sup>1</sup> who had invited the men of Kodapa and Mandari clan. Mesram Lachu was at that time the only member of the seven brother phratry in the village and consequently held a purely domestic feast. Among the five brother clans the men of Kanaka, Kursenga and Soyam clan ate the grain in Kanaka Kodu the *delan's* house while the only

and food for all the members of their clan group was cooked, but afterwards they took their share away to their own houses and ate it there.

<sup>1</sup> Since his wife was in her period the ceremony had to be delayed one day.



In Lachu Patel's kitchen two people were busy cooking the new *sama*: his brother's son Somu, who cooked the special food to be ceremonially eaten by the men, and the wife of Atram Jangu, known as *kaṭora* Jangu, because he is of the house of the *kaṭora* of the Sitagondi Persa Pen. It was dark. The only lights were the glow under the cooking pots and the flame of a small oil-lamp on a brass stand in the *pen komta*, the god's corner. When the new *sama* was ready, several women of the house brought big brass bowls, and as the *kaṭora's* wife filled them, serving the steaming hot *sama* with her hands, they were put in front of the *pen komta*. Then she heaped a great quantity of steaming *sama* on clean winnowing fans, lying opposite the hearth. Water was boiling in an old kerosene tin and *dal* curry cooking in another pot, while ghee and curds were warming; at the back of the room stood great pots full of freshly drawn water.

Now Lachu Patel's eldest wife brought a bundle of ficus leaves to the *pen komta* and on the ground below the lamp arranged them in six pairs in an overlapping line; the remainder she handed over to the *kaṭora's* wife, who counted out six pairs and set them aside on the largest of the brass trays heaped with cooked *sama*. Then the *kaṭora's* wife took a white metal vessel full of ghee and a brass bowl of *dal* and placed these near the *pen komta*, and then she served ghee and *dal* into all the brass bowls, pouring the liquid over the top of the *sama*. At last the largest dish, containing the leaves, was also put before the *pen komta*. Women and girls of all the households of the Pandwen Saga of Marlavai then entered the kitchen, each bringing an empty brass bowl. Now began the offering of the new *sama* to the Persa Pen in his aspect of Rota Pen. First the *kaṭora's* wife, then Lachu Patel's eldest wife, and then all the women and girls in turn, bowed down before the god's corner, sprinkled a little water and, taking some morsels of cooked *sama* and then *dal* from the large tray, scattered them over the six pairs of leaves; lastly they poured a line of water over the leaves to signify that the ritual was ended. After another reverence before the *pen komta*, each turned and scattered some food over the hearth stones.

Ultimately the *kaṭora's* wife picked up the brass dish with the ficus leaves and all the women and girls tramped through the living room and the veranda, crowded with men, to the front door. It was pouring with rain, and there was some delay as teak-leaves had to be found to protect the food on the open dish. Outside, the women stood facing the house, while a young man climbed a ladder to the roof and placed the six pairs of leaves handed to him by the *kaṭora's* wife, in a horizontal row on the thatch above the door. Then the *kaṭora's* wife, and after her all the other women and girls, threw handfuls of the new grain on to the roof and particularly on to the twelve leaves as an offering for the Persa Pen; then they turned and scattered some morsels in the street for the Departed. With this the women returned to the kitchen, and those of other

households filled their brass-dishes with *sama* cooked by the *kaṭoṛa*'s wife and took it back to their own houses.

The men's food too was ready and Atram Somu heaped the new *sama* on a large brass-tray. This was taken to the veranda, where men representing each household of the Pandwen *Saga* were assembled. The *sama* was placed on leaf-plates and, after scattering a little for the Departed, all partook of the ritual meal, which closed the day's ceremonies.

Two days later three young men, Kanaka Somu, of the *devari*'s family, Atram Ramu and Atram Sonu, went to the sanctuary of Kindi Auwal, the place where the rite on Sowing Eve had been performed. There they offered six small maize cobs, five they placed whole on the altar, and the grains of the sixth they scattered over the offering. After a short prayer, begging for Kindi Auwal's continued blessing, they returned without either cooking at the sanctuary or offering any cooked food.

### *The Harvest of the Early Millets.*

Almost immediately after the ritual First Eating of the new crops, begins the harvest of the small millets. *Sama*<sup>1</sup> is usually the first to ripen, and most Gonds have sown at least a small patch of this crop. On the day before the reaping of a *sama* field begins, one basketful of ears is cut, taken home and threshed out; the grain is cleaned and cooked at once and in the evening the men or boys who watch the crop, take it in a small brass pot and put it down in the field at a little distance from their watch platform.

In the morning they wash their faces and then offer some of the *sama* to the Departed by throwing it into the field; while scattering the cooked *sama* they pray:

Look give us good fortune,  
All you Departed,  
Dying you became gods, give us good  
fortune

*Surat mak barkat sim,*  
*Sanalir mirat,*  
*Sasi pen ati, mal barkat sim*

The idea is to attract the souls of the Departed by placing the *sama* in the field and so to solicit their favour by giving them a share of the new crop. The same rite is performed before the harvest of *bati*,<sup>2</sup> the other variety of small millet grown by the Gonds but no

...at day.

When after this rite, all the reapers gather on the field—and women of related households often help in the work—the owner scatters

<sup>1</sup> *Panicum miliare*.

<sup>2</sup> *Panicum italicum*.

some sweetened *dal* as an offering for the Earth Mother, or even sacrifices a chicken. The prayer is in either case a simple invocation of the Earth Mother:

Earth Mother look, to you we give  
offerings.

*Dhartri Auwal sura, nik yewi inmaj.*

The reaping of the small millets is generally done by women. They use neither knives nor sickles, but break the stalks just below the ears between thumb and forefinger, filling them into the folds of their *sari*. From time to time they empty their *sari* into a basket standing on the ground. *Bari*<sup>1</sup> ripens shortly after *sama* and is reaped in the same manner. Both varieties are threshed in the village. The ears are heaped on well-swept ground before the house and the grain trodden out, the threshers often holding on to a post stamp and mill the ears with their feet. The quantities of small millets grown are, as a rule, not very great, and the threshing is soon finished; it is comparatively light work often done by half-grown boys and girls. Winnowing of small millets is the task of women, who usually winnow in their houses or, if the weather permits, in the court-yards, tossing the grain in their basket-work fans.

When the small millets have ripened the Gond knows that the rains are drawing to their close and he thinks himself fortunate if there follow sufficient showers to sprout his second crop. The air is now clear and lucid, fat-bellied clouds drift through the deep blue sky and throw rapidly changing shadows over a land still glorying in all the brilliant greens born of and sustained by the monsoon rains. Here and there wide fields of brilliant colour are set in the green of forest and pasture: the pulses are in bloom and sesame with its multiple flowers of delicate mauve stretches, a bright carpet, over the undulating fields, while on high ground flowers the bright yellow marguerite-like *churchal*. Chillies and the egg-plants with their lilac flowers have long been transplanted from seed beds and stand now in orderly lines. Yellowish green rice fills the hollows of the valleys and the delicate sprays of the coppery maize blossoms dance above the forest of broad shiny leaves. Plucking the tender cobs and cooking them in the hot ashes of a quickly-lighted fire is now the joy of young people watching the crops, and in the evening many young men gather in the maize plots and sit gossiping round fires, roasting maize cobs and rubbing the hot grains off between the palms. It is a good time of ample and varied food and nightly singing and dancing to the mellow tone of the earthen *gumela* drums or the small handy *para*, beaten caressingly with gentle fingers. Gentle and haunting too are the tunes of the simple songs that tell of the ornaments tinkling on a pretty girl, of the birds

1. *Panicum italicum*.

in forest and field and the fruits ripening on the trees\*

Little pretty girl oh Bendoh darling  
Your ear rings tinkling tinkling  
Bendoh darling  
Little pretty girl oh Bendoh darling,  
Your silver belt tinkling tinkling  
Bendoh darling  
Little pretty girl oh Bendoh darling  
Your anklets tinkling tinkling  
Bendoh darling

*Chudur china dani, cha Bendoh dani,  
ni tori gulugulugul mar Bendoh  
dani  
Chudur china dani, cha Bendoh dani,  
ni pati gulugulugul mar Bendoh  
dani  
Chudur china dani, cha Bendoh dani,  
ni panyol gulugulugul mar Bendoh  
dani*

Dear sister in law, bring the gun, I'll  
go and shoot a peafowl  
Don't shoot brother in law don't  
shoot the peahen is laying her eggs  
Dear sister in law, bring the gun, I'll  
go and shoot a peafowl  
Don't shoot brother in law, don't  
shoot the peahen is laying her eggs  
On the rugged stony hill a peahen  
came to feed  
A dozen and more peachicks she  
brought with her to feed  
A hawk swept down  
To carry off the peachicks  
A dozen and more peachicks the hawk  
carried off

*Tara ange bhande, mal pora daka  
Paima koko paima mal meskunk uata  
Tara ange bhande, mal pora daka  
Paima koko paimo, mal meskunk uata  
Chucha chumora metate mal meta  
lata  
Sola bara porikun mal meha lata  
Hank uator porar dego, mal porikun  
uoiare  
Sola bara porikun dega pasi uoiare*

King Pipal stands on the village border  
King Pipal is covered in blossom  
King Pipal's fruit sprang forth  
Ripe are King Pipal's fruits  
A hundred and fifty green pigeons,  
Flock to the King and eat the fruit

*Sua sandi te ali raja  
Ali baru uata raja uata yo  
Ali pare uata raja uata yo  
Ali panda raja lata yo,  
Deda nure ponak raja uata,  
Ponak koriya lata raja lata ho*

I'll take the road to Chanda oh  
sister in law  
My heart is set on going  
Give me my scarf oh, sister in law  
The scarf as red as the Flame of the  
Forest  
Give me my turban oh, sister in law  
The turban as red as a panjor flower  
Give me my sword, oh, sister in law  
The sword like a blade of jajari  
millet  
Give me my gun, oh sister in law  
The gun Ramjangi oh sister in law  
My heart is yet set on going

*Chanda chakoli naua painam ki onge  
Nana painam bhala daka naua ange  
Mura pungar naua sela ki onge  
Ade sela naua sim ki ange  
Panjor pungar naua rumal ki ange  
Ade rumal naua sim ki ange  
Jona ahi naua piring ange  
Ade piring naua sim ki ange  
Ramjangi naua bhande ki ange  
Ade bhande naua sim ki ange  
Nana painam bhala daka naua ange*

## CHAPTER IX

### THE COOL SEASON

THE transition from the rains to the dry and cooler season which in India is almost universally described as the "cold weather" is not as abrupt as the change over from the hot season to the rains, when the break of the monsoon sometimes recasts the face of the earth in hardly twenty-four hours. The rainy season ends gradually. There may be very little rain after the middle of September, or October may still see the ample rainfall so beneficial to the second crops. But on the whole one may say that the typical damp monsoon-weather ends in September. The weeks and months that follow are by no means 'cold,' but they bring fair weather with lower temperatures than occur at any other time of the year and in December and January there are chilly nights and dew sparkles in the morning sunlight. Terms associated with the seasons in temperate zones are definitely misleading when applied to the weather in the Deccan, and I have therefore refrained from speaking of autumn or winter. To refer to the period without extremes of heat or humidity from October to February as the cool weather has, on the other hand, the double advantage of conforming to general usage, without leading the reader to the erroneous assumption that the seasons of the Deccan can be co-ordinated with the seasons in Europe.

By the end of the rains, which coincides roughly with the end of Akurpok, the sowing of the cold weather crops, known to the Gonds by the Urdu term *rabi*, has as a rule already begun, for the second sowing starts almost simultaneously with the harvesting of the small millets. No ceremony comparable to the Mohtur rite on First Sowing Day precedes the *rabi*-sowing, the religio-magical effects of the Mohtur being considered sufficient to ensure supernatural blessing and protection for both crops. Everyone is free to begin sowing his second crops whenever he chooses and when setting to work the cultivator seldom does more than scatter some food-offerings on the field and invoke the help of the Earth Mother.

Yet in rare cases a man anxious to secure bountiful crops may, even before setting foot on the field ready to receive the seed, resort to the powerful magic of song and the spoken word. Among the crops raised in the cool season, jawari, the great millet, is by far the most important, and it is the story of how Anarani, the Corn Queen, was first won for mankind, which exerts, if told with reverence and under the right conditions, a wonderfully beneficial influence on the growth of the crops.

Few men know this long story in detail and still fewer Pardhans are able to recite it in its full form. But if such a Pardhan is found and a Gond is prepared to pay for the recital elaborate preparations are made to create a setting appropriate to the sanctity of the story. The whole house is cleaned and newly plastered with cow dung and the women cook special food, sweetened bread and fried cakes as they do on feast days. In the evening the householder takes a little of his own seed millet and heaps it in the god's corner of the kitchen and on top of the heap of seed he places an earthen oil lamp. He invites the villagers and his own kinsmen from nearby villages. Before starting his recital the Pardhan takes a ceremonial bath and dons clean clothes, and so he must do every day as long as the recitation lasts. For five successive nights he sings in the courtyard of his patron's house, playing his fiddle and accompanied by his two assistants. For five nights special food is served to the guests and on each of these nights the lamp is lit on the seed grain after water has been sprinkled and incense burnt, when the recital ends young shoots drawn forth by the magical power of song have sprouted from the grain.<sup>1</sup> For such a recital the Pardhan is richly rewarded by his patron—a large calf, a bullock or even a horse being the customary gifts. The grain that has remained during the recital in the god's corner of the kitchen, is mixed with the owner's seed grain, to which it communicates the fertility conjured by the song's magic.

It is nowadays rare that a Pardhan sings the story of the Corn Queen, but it may also be told in prose and if the same preparations are made it exerts a similarly beneficial though perhaps not quite so powerful an influence on the crop—the millet under the lamp does not sprout, but this is explained by the far shorter time required for telling the whole tale—one or two nights usually sufficing.

One fine evening at the end of Akurpok I came to the house of Kanaka Moti—a clever old man well versed in the lore of the tribe, and found an unusually large number of men and young boys on his veranda, while women crowded in the doorway of the inner room. Moti sat with his back to the wall where a small light flickered in an iron hanging lamp, and round him sat his listeners, shadows leaning against walls and veranda posts. The red glow of leaf pipes betrayed that in the courtyard too an audience had gathered. Moti was telling the story of the Corn Queen which only he of all the villagers knew how to relate.

### *The Story of the Corn Queen*

When Sri Shembu Mahadeo had created gods and men, twelve and a half castes of men,—began Moti Patel in a voice just loud

<sup>1</sup> Kanaka Moti told me that once in the now deserted village of Terkarjani he had attended such a ceremony in the house of the Mahasab Koonaka Pando, and he swears that he saw the sprouted grain with his own eyes. Any manipulation on the side of the Pardhan is out of the question as he may not enter the kitchen, but it is quite likely that in the warm air of the kitchen, the grain sprouts under the daily sprinkling with water.

enough to carry into the courtyard,—the men settled at Dhanegaon, and there they were married. They lived on wild tubers and mahua flowers, tamarinds, *chironji*,<sup>1</sup> *bel*-fruits,<sup>2</sup> and edible leaves; on such jungle fruits they lived. Sri Shembu was anxious for their welfare; how could they survive eating only the fruits of the jungle? He thought to himself: "Where is the Corn Queen. She will nourish mankind. But who will be able to find her?" So thinking he wrote letters to Sri Shek and all the other gods, summoning them to his court. Then all the gods came and asked: "Wherefore did you summon us?"

"We are gods," so spoke Sri Shembu, "we have made men, but can they survive? How to sustain them? Who can advise me?"

And all the gods said: "We are gods but of this matter we know nothing."

Then spoke Sri Shek: "In Udu Dip lives Raja Bikram, the son of Maya Guru; invite him to come. If any can answer your question it is he."

So Sri Shembu sent for Raja Bikram, and obeying his summons the Raja came, bade Ram, Ram and asked Sri Shembu's wishes.

"Raja Bikram," said god Shembu, "you know all things on earth and in water; you know even the tongues of the birds. Mankind is created, but how shall mankind survive? The answer to this only you can provide. The Corn Queen must be brought to mankind; none but you can find her."

Then Raja Bikram consented to go in search of the Corn Queen. He returned home and invited the townspeople to feast with him before he set out; and he ordered his two wives to prepare a meal and some food for the journey of the morrow.

That evening as the sun was sinking and the herds returned from the forest, all the people gathered in the Raja's courtyard. The food was made ready and washing their hands, they all sat down to eat.

It was dark when they had finished the meal and the Raja said to his guests: "It is night, do not go home lest you hurt your feet in the dark and on that account say you have come to harm through me." Gladly all agreed to stay overnight and settled down to sleep in the Raja's courtyard; and he too had his bed brought out into the open and slept in the middle of his guests. But his three wives slept inside the house near the hearth.

In the middle of the night the Raja woke up, feeling very thirsty. He reached for his golden goblet, standing usually beside his bed, but could not find it. So he called loudly to his wives and after some time they heard him; but they only shouted back: "All around you

1. The kernels of *Buchanania latifolia*.

2. *Aegle marmelos*.

your guests sleep, how shall we get to you without treading on them, if you want water, get up and fetch it yourself' Annoyed, the Raja abused his wives and at last exasperated by their impertinence shouted 'If you won't bring me water, leave my house to-morrow morning and I will marry other girls'—'Very well, we'll go, and you can marry as many wives as you like,' retorted the enraged women—

I certainly will replied the Raja 'I'll marry the Corn Queen' Hardly had he spoken the name of the Corn Queen when water came miraculously into his mouth and his thirst was quenched, food entered his mouth and he felt contented and happy

Then the Raja thought to himself 'If the mere mention of the Corn Queen's name works such wonders, how great must be the bliss of her presence certainly I must go and find her' And next morning he saddled his horse and ordering his wives to tie up food in a cloth rode off to find the Corn Queen. He did not know which road to take but bade his good horse take him wherever it would

For six months he rode without finding any trace of the Corn Queen Then he came to another world a world which was yellow, men soil stones, grass and trees were yellow After riding for two months through the yellow world he came to a red world, where men, soil and plants were red, and thereafter he passed through a black world, a white world, a world of brass a world of copper, a world of silver and at last he reached a world of gold where men, soil, and plants and stones were all the colour of gold

In this world of gold he came into the shade of a banyan tree, and after riding under its branches for twelve years, he reached the trunk. There he dismounted tied up his horse, cut some grass for its feed spread his blanket and went to sleep

Waking after some time he lay looking up into the branches of the great tree and saw a part of a white snake hanging from a branch

His parents were begging her brother to tell her a story After refusing many times, the male nestling began 'Every year our parents raise children, but every year the great snake comes and swallows them up To-night is the night of the snake's coming and then it will eat us and it will also eat the Raja who sleeps under this tree, and the Raja's horse. But if the Raja is a wise man he can save us all When the snake wriggles out of the ground it will be quite small then a wind will spring up and the snake will grow and grow The Raja must cut it in two with his sword, but the two parts will both turn and attack him, and he must cut them into four pieces, these four he must cut into eight the eight into sixteen and the sixteen into thirty two pieces. Then he must collect the thirty two pieces and cover them with a cloth On the head of the snake he will find two pieces of gold, these he must



cut off. Then a frog will come out of the well, he is the friend of the snake, and the Raja must kill him too and on the frog's head he will find two more pieces of gold. These four pieces of gold the Raja must put near the well and then he will be able to see seven sacks of gold at the bottom; these he must take out."

Then the birds talked to the Raja and asked him whence he had come. He told them how he was looking for the Corn Queen and the young birds promised they would help him to find her if he saved them from the snake.

That evening the moon was full, and at midnight a snake appeared, small at first but growing rapidly. The Raja did as the birds had said and cut the snake into two, four and ultimately into thirty-two pieces. He also killed the frog and took the gold from the well. Then exhausted he lay down to sleep.

In the morning the two parent birds came home to feed their young, each with an elephant in its beak. But the young birds turned away their heads and remained silent. "Why are you angry children?" asked the parents. But the young birds gave no answer. At last the male nestling spoke: "For twelve years you have reared children; and every year they perish and you do nothing to save them. But the Raja who sleeps under this tree saved us last night from the great snake; he is our father and mother. He is looking for the Corn Queen, and until you help him to find her we will not eat." The parent birds declared that this was impossible, but the young birds threatened to starve to death and so at last the parent birds swore by all the great gods that they would help the Raja in his quest for the Corn Queen.

Then they took a cloth and tied it round the Raja's chest, and each taking one end, carried him between them, high into the air. They flew and flew until at last they came to the ocean and over the ocean they flew till the land was no longer in sight.

Then the Raja heard a noise as of the rustling of leaves. "It is the sound of the Corn Queen," said the birds, "now it is dawn and the heads shoot out of the stem." *Krri, krri*, the sheathed heads pushed up through the stalks. Straight out of the ocean grew the jawari, and the birds told the Raja to hold himself in readiness, to grasp his sword and as they flew past, catch the budding ear with the left hand and cut off the stalk a yard high.

And as the birds glided over the plant, Raja Bikram grasped the stem with the sheathed ear in his left hand, cut the stalk and tied it up in his scarf. Back over the ocean the birds carried him to the banyan tree, where he had left his horse. They said to him: "Take the stalk home. Do not look at it on the way. In the god's corner of your house make *pūja* and there cut through the sheath."

Raja Bikram thanked the birds, mounted his horse and started

on his homeward journey For many months he rode and not once did he look at the jawari stalk tied up in the scarf round his waist At last he reached the borders of his own town, and sat down to rest in the shade of a tree Sitting there he thought, 'So far I travelled to find the Corn Queen and what have I brought back? Who knows what is inside this sheath? Is it the Corn Queen or is it only leaves? If I come back to my people saying, I have brought the Corn Queen, and I have nothing but leaves, all will laugh

So thinking he spread his blanket and carefully slit open the sheath of the millet plant Inside he found a small girl six months and one year old overjoyed he set her on his horse and led her into his garden which lay outside the town There he put her down under a tree and said "Wait here for a while O Corn Queen, I will go to the town and bring you in with full honours"

and went to the Raja's garden There under a tree she found the Corn Queen, grown to a lovely girl, dressed in precious clothes and jewels

"The Raja has sent me to you" said Lali the maid servant, soon he will come and take you in triumph to his house' Trustingly the Corn Queen greeted her and they began to talk in friendly fashion After a while Lali the maid servant said "What beautiful clothes you have, let me see how I would look in your beautiful clothes' Smiling the Corn Queen lent the girl her sari and bodice and she hung ornaments on Lali's neck and arms Then Lali the maid servant said "Let us go to the well, there I can see how I look" and she led the Corn Queen to the deep well at the end of the garden Together they leant over the edge to see the reflection in the water and as they bent over the top of the well, Lali the maid servant grasped the legs of the Corn Queen and threw her head foremost into the well And in the deep water the Corn Queen was drowned

But Lali the servant girl went back to the tree to wait for the Raja Along the path from the village came the procession with drums and trumpets, elephants, horses and palanquin and as they approached she drew her sari over her face and Raja Bikram taking her for the Corn Queen, seated her in the palanquin and carried her in triumph to his house where he put her in a swing and ordered ten women to swing her

Then all the world heard that Raja Bikram had brought the Corn Queen, and God Shembu too heard of her coming But the real Corn Queen lay drowned at the bottom of the well Her spirit

(*jiv*) changed into a beautiful red flower, a king's flower, the flower of a rose floating on the surface of the water and in the morning when the gardener came for water he drew it up in his great leather bucket. Greatly he marvelled at this beautiful flower that smelt so sweet and he laid it carefully on the earth so that the whole garden was filled with its scent. Then in a moment the flower took root, changed into a sandalwood tree, and throughout the garden flowers sprang up, blossoms of fragrant jasmine, gardenia, queen of the night and many other flowers, white, pink and red.

When night came the Corn Queen took the shape of a young girl and at midnight went to the Raja's palace, jumped over the closed gate into the courtyard and began to dance and sing '*pugri pu*.' Then when it was time for the first cock's crow she stopped, crying out: "Oh! stupid Raja; there is no greater fool on earth than you. From my homeland you brought me, only to throw me away. Luck will never be yours. Lali, the maid-servant, you put in the swing; there is no fool greater than you." Then she burst into tears, jumped over the gate and returned to the garden.

Thus two weeks passed, and each night the Corn Queen came a-dancing in the Raja's courtyard. Then one night Lali the maid-servant heard the singing and she, coming out into the courtyard saw the Corn Queen dancing and she heard how at the end of her dance the Corn Queen abused the Raja and began to cry. Lali ran out of the house and fell at her feet: "Sister, why are you crying?" she asked. "Where are you living now? Tomorrow I will come and fetch you."

"I am now in the garden, in the shape of a sandalwood tree," answered the Corn Queen.

"Then go," answered Lali the maid-servant "for tomorrow I will certainly come and fetch you."

The Corn Queen returned to the sandalwood tree.

But when the sun rose and the men went to work, Lali sent for the Raja: "In your garden grows a sandalwood tree; that is an evil tree, a tree of ill-omen. Send your men to fell it, chop it into pieces and burn it to ashes."

Obeying the word of her whom he thought to be the Corn Queen Raja Bikram sent men to cut and burn the tree. But as they cut a splinter flew from the stroke of the axe and fell near the well and a Brahmin coming to the well to wash and noticing the fragrant scent, picked up the splinter and took it home to scent the bath water.

In his courtyard the splinter turned into a taro plant, and at night from out of the taro plant rose the Corn Queen; again she went to the Raja's house, danced in the courtyard, singing *pugri*, *pugri pu* and again when it was time for the cock to crow she abused the Raja for his foolishness and then returned to the taro plant.

So it happened on many nights. But Lali the maid servant again overheard her. She went to greet the Corn Queen, promising to fetch her on the morrow if the Corn Queen would reveal where she lived. I am now in a taro plant in the garden of a Brahmin, so saying she vanished.

Next morning Lali the maid servant demanded the destruction of the taro plant. Accordingly men were sent to destroy it, they uprooted the taro plant and pounding it to pieces threw it outside the Brahmin's courtyard.

There it turned into wild growing spinach. Nevertheless the Corn Queen continued to come every night to the Raja's courtyard. But before many days had passed Lali the maid servant again per-

and Lali drawing from the Corn Queen her secret, demanded of the

At the next evening the Corn Queen came again to dance in the Raja's courtyard and this time she sang *pugri, pugri, pugri, pugri, pugri pu*. On this night the Raja himself heard her, sat up in his bed and went out to see who sang in the courtyard. Unseen he stood watching the Corn Queen, he heard how she abused him for his foolishness and suddenly, knowing everything he burst into tears. Falling at her feet he exclaimed, 'I have betrayed you! How it came to pass I know not.'

You who know even when the Ganges sleeps and understand the tongues of the birds, answered the Corn Queen, 'how were you deceived by so small a thing?' And she told him all that Lali the maid servant had done for her destruction and how each evil had been countered with blessings for mankind, flowers, vegetables, small mullets, the ever fruitful fig and last of all the jawari millet.

But now my work is done and I will leave you, she concluded.

I cannot let you go, cried Raja Bikram.

If you want to keep me with you then do as I say. Tomorrow morning go to your fields and harvest the millet, bring it to your courtyard, cut off the ears and beat out the seed with sticks." So saying, she vanished.

The Raja was filled with sadness and with wrath against Lali the maid servant. And when it was morning he summoned all the men, beat Lali in public, bound her feet with rope, tied the rope to a pair of bullocks and had her dragged round the whole town, then

out in the fields he buried her alive. There she turned into a weed, while in the wake of the bullocks, from the ground over which her body had been dragged sprang up chilli plants.<sup>1</sup>

When Lali was buried the Raja set all his men to accomplish the Corn Queen's bidding: first felled the fig-tree, and planted it in his courtyard. Then reaped the ripe jawari millet, put the ears in the god's corner of his house and as he made *puja* the millet turned into a girl child six months old, and the Raja worshipping her put her into a swing.

With the Corn Queen installed wealth and happiness came to the town. In the gardens grew sandalwood trees and bright, sweet-smelling flowers, outside the courtyards where the taro had been thrown sprang up maize and where the wild growing spinach had been flung grew the small millets, *sama* and *bari*, the pulses *peshel*, *purtur* and *tetre*,<sup>2</sup> and where the roselle had scattered its seed sprouted jawari millet. But where the Raja had planted the fig-tree there appeared the swing of the Goddess of Wealth.

From the town's edge as far as the boundary stretched fields of jawari millet, maize, small millets, pulses and beans. Some ripened after two and a half months, some after four months, some after five months, and when the crops were reaped and threshed grain filled the bins and storehouses, the baskets in the rooms and the baskets in the attics. The Raja's cows increased and within three harvests all his cattle was fat and flourishing. There was enough grain in the Raja's house to feed the whole town, indeed there was no room even to sit down, so much grain was there. But the Raja, after the first rejoicing, soon wearied of so much wealth.

News reached the gods at Dauragiri and they began to say to each other: "Raja Bikram is behaving stupidly. The Gonds are dull witted; they can work hard, but they know not how to use the fruits of their labour. They do not deserve wealth. Shall we not take the Corn from them?"

Then God Shembu made ants, big black ants, small brown ants, small ants that stink, and red ants. To each kind he gave work; the black ants to carry off beans and lentils, the brown ants to carry off grain, the stinking ants to carry off cooked food and the red ants to carry off the flowers of the fig-tree.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile Raja Bikram had again doubled his stores of grain. There was a glut in the land. He sickened of the sight of millet. "I have enough corn to last me till the end of my life; there is no space in my house even to sit down. Depart oh, Corn Queen!"

1. As a weed she continues her struggle with the Corn Queen, the millet; chillies (*Capsicum frutescens*), always grown close to the villages, have a hot biting taste, hot as the malice of Lali, and red like her blood which flowed as the bullocks dragged her round the town.

2. For botanical names, see p. 344.

3. *Ficus glomerata* has an insignificant flower and most trees are infested with red ants.

"Raja Bikram," replied the Corn Queen, "have you become so proud within so short a time that you tell me to go? If you send me away you will be beggared. Think it over well, you brought me from my home, took me from my own people, if now you drive me away, where shall I go?"

"What do I care, what you do or where you may go? Leave my house or I'll hit you with a slipper." And taking off his slipper he beat a heap of grain five times.

Crying the Corn Queen left the Raja's house, crying she went to God Shembu. What shall I do now? So happily I lived in my homeland but Raja Bikram carried me off, first he betrayed me, then cherished me and when I had showered him with wealth, he drove me out, how can I return home?"

Sri Shembu was at a loss what to do, nor could Bhumana or any of the other gods advise her.

Sadly the Corn Queen went away weeping, and wandering to wards the east she came after six months to the shores of the sea. There she sat down and cried. One and a quarter months she sat there weeping and lamenting. "Oh, scoundrel of a Raja! May you turn into dust! Your line will end, not a grain of corn will remain in your house. Against me you have sinned. Having entered the world of men how can I return home? I have elder sisters, I have a mother, I have a father, I have a shining temple and a fair country, but to that happy home I cannot return. My elder sisters are Bhui Lachmi, Dipakmata Lachmi, Dhan Lachmi, Gaurmata Lachmi, Karma Lachmi and Sanesha Lachmi,<sup>1</sup> of them I am Ana Lachmi the youngest. Jaldevi is my mother, Hartar Guru my father, seven are their daughters. Such is my family yet must I live in exile."

Now on the shores of the sea a Mang lived in his poor small hut, and coming one morning

"It is now twenty four years voice have I heard," he thought or spirit? Or is it a human being? Let me see."

So he followed the sound and found the Corn Queen sitting on the shore of the sea.

"Mother," he said, "where do you come from? What is your village? Whose wife or daughter are you? Wherefore do you cry?"

"Silly Mang, I am Hartar Guru's daughter, I am the Corn Queen. I came to this world to nourish mankind. From my home the wicked Raja Bikram brought me. But those stupid Gonds! They have no appreciation of wealth, a short while sufficed to puff them with pride, the Gonds, they grew weary of me. The Marwari he knows how to use wealth, the buffalo knows how to grow fat, the Brahmin knows how to appease anger but the Gonds have no virtue,

<sup>1</sup> Earth Goddess, Lamp Goddess, Cattle Goddess, Disease Goddess, the Goddess of Fate and the Goddess of Unrewarded Works.

no strength, and their tempers are fiery and quick. As for me, alas! what is to happen to me. I have cut myself off from the Gonds. But once having lived in the world of men, how can I return to the world of gods? How can I return to my home?"

"Oh good Mother, do not worry," said the Mang. "It is I who will care for you."

"Silly Mang! The lord of Dhauragiri and even Bhimana dared not keep me. Will you a Mang be able to keep me in your small hut?"

"Though I be a Mang, can I not care for you? Do not worry, but come with me."

"Oh, Mang of high courage, if you speak so, then to you I will come."

So the Corn Queen went with the Mang; he seated her on a swing and taking the rope between his teeth he began to sew shoes; with his mouth he swang the Corn Queen, with his hands he sewed his shoes.

But Raja Bikram's house was empty; there was nothing to eat, no grain, no money, no cattle. All was gone.

Raja Bikram sat weeping and thought: 'What shall I do, how shall I live?' And he wrote a petition and went to God Shembu. "I have greatly erred; you and the whole world will blame me. I have been very foolish; I ventured so much for the Corn Queen, but when I had brought her I drove her away. Now she is gone. How shall mankind survive? You, God Shembu, must show me the way."

"You behaved like a fool," replied God Shembu, "too soon you grew proud; the Gonds are like that; because of their folly they will ever be poor."

Moti Patel had come to the end of the first part of his story; the night was far advanced and his listeners were tired after the ploughing in preparation for the sowing of millet, wheat and cotton; so the party broke up. But next evening Moti again lit the lamp on the heap of millet in his kitchen and after the evening meal continued the tale of how after all mankind acquired jawari, the great millet. At first it seemed as if he had begun an entirely new story, for without mentioning the Corn Queen or Raja Bikram he told how Anesirar, the son of Bhui Lachmi, the Earth Goddess, and her sister Durga Boani's son, Parsi Ram always quarrelled. "I am the greater," said Anesirar. "No, I am greater" said Parsi Ram, and this went on for so long that at last god Shembu decided to end the quarrel, and he set the two young men a test to prove their greatness—they should bring home Ansa Devi, a beautiful girl, from a distant land. It was Anesirar who succeeded and braving all dangers, won Ansa Devi and brought her back to his mother Bhui Lachmi.

When Anesirar had shown Ansa Devi to all the gods in  
 "to his  
 "ne you  
 "est and

clear a piece of land' Anesirar did as his mother bid him. Then Bhui Lachmi told him to plough. But he had neither plough nor bullocks and so Bhui Lachmi sent him to a *sahukar* to hire bullocks. Anesirar went to the *sahukar* and greeted him. "Ram ram, *sahukar* — 'Ram ram, son, who are you and what have you come for?' — I am Anesirar, and I want a pair of bullocks for ploughing." — 'I have no plough bullocks but I have two young untrained bulls if you want them you can take them.' Anesirar agreed, but he had no ropes, and so he caught a few cobras and with these he harnessed the bulls and led them to his mother.

Now you have bulls, said Bhui Lachmi, "but you lack implements. Go to Visa Bama, the blacksmith and ask him to make you a plough share, a broad plough, a plough staff and a sickle."

So Anesirar went to the Khati Visa Bama, also known as Reva Guru, and asked him to make him agricultural implements. "I have no tools with which to make them," replied Visa Bama, "no anvil, no hammer, no pincers and no bellows, therefore I cannot help you. But the blacksmith's wife intervened and said, "Take our son and out of him make your tools." So Visa Bama took his son, he cut off the head and this became the anvil, he cut off the arms and they became pincers, he cut off the legs and they became hammers, at last he stripped the skin from the body and made it into bellows.

And when Visa Bama had done all this he had the tools with which to make agricultural implements for Anesirar. All that day he worked and next day they were ready. Anesirar thanked Visa Bama and took the tools home: a plough share, a broad plough, a plough-staff and a sickle.

Then he yoked his bulls to the plough with cobras and ploughed up his whole field. When he had finished ploughing he said to Bhimana: "See, the field is ready, and the rains are drawing near, clouds are gathering and any day the weather may break, but we have no seed. What shall we do without seed?"

Bhimana suggested asking Sri Shembu for seed and they both went to his court house where they found him amidst all his gods. Sri Shembu agreed to give them as much seed as they themselves could carry away,—but he had only Indian corn and the small millets *sama* and *barr*. Of these seeds Anesirar took two measures on his shoulders and carried one measure on his head. But Bhimana took one large sack on each shoulder and two sacks on his head, tied one sack round his waist and two measures to each knee.



Then they went home. Anesirar began ploughing, and Ansa Devi sowed the maize, and after that Anesirar broadcast the small millets; and as they sowed, the crops sprang up behind, and within a few days the sprouts were many inches high.

Now when Sri Shembu had given Anesirar the seed-grain, he had made one condition: whatever grew above the ground should be his share, while Anesirar should keep whatever grew below the surface. When the crop had grown to full height Anesirar noticed that it was only stalks and leaves—there were neither cobs nor ears. So he went and asked Bhimana how such a thing could be. Bhimana told him to dig up the earth. And under the ground, among the roots, Anesirar found huge maize-cobs and full ears of the small millets.

Then while Bhimana cut all the stalks and took them on his back to Sri Shembu, Anesirar ploughed up the field and unearthed all the grain. But god Shembu was ill-content with his share, and insisted that next time the crop should be divided differently: he should get what grew under the ground and Anesirar what grew above.

Again Anesirar and Ansa Devi sowed, but this time the cobs and ears grew on stalks and Sri Shembu received only the bare roots.

When the rains came to an end, Anesirar prepared his field for the *rabi* crops. But he had no jawari seed, and he knew it would be useless to sow maize or small millets in the cold season. So once more he and Bhimana went to Sri Shembu, but the god declared that he himself had no jawari millet and sent them to his elder brother Sri Shek. But neither had Sri Shek any jawari, and he advised them to go to Hariman, the guardian of the house of Suriya Raja and Chandra Raja, the sun and the moon, and to ask him for jawari; for Hariman the Mang was the guardian of the Corn Queen.<sup>1</sup>

After a long journey Anesirar and Bhimana came to the house where Hariman guarded the millet and they told him how God Shembu and Sri Shek had sent them to him for the seed of the giant millet. Hariman listened to what they had to say, but declared he could give the millet only if Suriya Raja and Chandra Raja, the sun and the moon, consented and witnessed the deal. Hearing this, Bhimana caused himself to grow very tall, and he stretched out his hand and held up sun and moon in their celestial courses. "How dare you stop us" said the sun and the moon in great anger, "we have no time to tarry." But Bhimana begged their presence only for one moment and so they went with him to Hariman the Mang and ordered that jawari-seed should be given to Anesirar. Hariman, the Mang, had no measure, but he scooped up the millet seed with his hands,

1. Cf. Anesirar's plea to Shembu Pen to show him where the Corn Queen was, in a poetical version of the same episode, p. 322.

and Suriya Raja and Chandra Raja said they would see to it that Anesirar returned double the quantity next year<sup>1</sup>

When Anesirar returned home with the jawari seed all his people rejoiced and he and Ansa Devi started at once sowing millet with the plough and seed drill. And as they went along the field, the crop sprouted behind them and in their wake the brown earth was covered with fresh green. When the millet came into ear, Anesirar built a platform from which to guard the ripening crop against birds and monkeys and there he was sitting when Sri Shembu and his wife Parvati happened to pass the field on their white Nandi. They saw the heavy ears of the ripening millet and both were filled with desire to taste this luscious crop<sup>2</sup>. So Shembu dismounted and approaching the field platform asked Anesirar politely for five ears of his millet. But Anesirar, jealous of his new crop, answered brusquely: "This is my millet and no god has any claim on it, I won't give you even a single ear." At this Sri Shembu returned to Parvati, and complained of Anesirar's rudeness.

But Parvati grew angry: "You don't know how to deal with the man," he said, "let me go, I assure you Anesirar won't refuse me the millet." So she went back to her husband and told him what had happened.

Seeing her, Anesirar got very frightened and answered in a timid voice: "It is only me, a poor Gond,"—"Make *laura, bahinchod*,<sup>3</sup> come down at once, you son of a pig," shouted Girjal Parvati, lifting her stick and cut me some of your jawari." Without a word Anesirar climbed down in fear and trembling and gave her all the millet she wanted. And it is since that time that Mussalmans are in the world and that the Gonds must do their bidding and give them whatever they ask.

Anesirar reaped his millet, but he did not return the seed grain he had borrowed from Harman. Thousands of years passed and at last Harman returned.

Now all the Gond men of their debt to Harman, even today whenever there is an eclipse the people of Mang caste go round to the houses of all peasants and ask for jawari in repayment of the old debt.<sup>4</sup>

1 This episode is told in several conflicting versions: according to some Harman is only the guardian of the house and grain-store of sun and moon, but according to others the jawari belongs to him and Suriya Raja and Chandra Raja function only as witnesses and guarantors.

2 For a poetical version of this episode cf. p. 340. Tsangle Devi figuring in that version as Ansa's wife is obviously identical with Ansa Devi.

3 Green jawari slightly coated on an open fire is a very popular snack.

4 Two favourite awra words, meaning copulator with your mother and copulator with your wife, which the Gonds frequently hear from the lips of Uda-speaking policemen and forest guards.

So ended the story of how the Gonds got the great millet, their main dry-weather crop, and the reader may well wonder that a tale containing so many elements evidently borrowed from Hindu stories should be attributed with such particular efficaciousness and magical power. But we must accept the Gonds' own valuation of their myths, and there can be no doubt that the story of the Corn Queen and the coming of the great millet is considered very valuable and sacred and is told only on rare occasions. Though interwoven with numerous elements of Hindu mythology it makes it quite clear that the Gonds themselves consider the jawari millet as of later introduction than the small millets, and that in tribal memory there still looms the time when only rain crops were raised. That Anesirar, the Gond culture hero, received the jawari seed not from the gods, but from Hariman, the Mang, a member of an untouchable Marathi caste, may also be of significance. But the discussion of this problem must await a later chapter.

### *Dry Weather Crops.*

The crops sown in September and October and grown during the cool and dry season have attained their present importance only with the Gonds' gradual transition from shifting-cultivation on the light soils to the permanent tillage of the heavy soils of the plains and valleys. Fields of *patar*, the coarse, reddish soil on high ground are always left fallow during the cool season, and even *chelkar*, the finer light soil of the gentle hill-slopes and of large areas in the plains is more favourable for rain crops than for those dependent on dew and a few irregular showers.

Most of the fields which bore crops in the previous cool season remain fallow during the rains, and these are ploughed once or twice during the months of Pola and Akurpok. But on some land of very rich black soil small millets are grown as a first crop, and, after their harvest, wheat, cotton or various kinds of pulses are sown.

The main dry weather crops are white jawari, cotton, wheat and pulses, particularly *chenna*.<sup>1</sup> Castor is also grown a good deal, both for home consumption as lamp-oil and as a money crop. All Gonds realize the advantages of the rotation of crops, and just as in the rains they never grow oil-seed in two consecutive years on the same field, so they sow in the dry season alternatively jawari and cotton. Whereas land cultivated during the rains is generally left fallow in the subsequent cold weather, a field with black cotton soil where pulse has been sown as a *rabi* crop is often sown with rice in the following rains. But only men with ample land can afford to change their crops to the best advantage; those who have one or two fields sow year after year jawari interspersed with a few lines of pulses, for jawari is the crop which provides their staple food.

1. *Cicer arietinum*.

The sowing of the cold weather crops is done in much the same way as that of the rain crops the men guide the plough and the women sow the seed through the seed drill. There is very little broadcasting of seeds for neither small millets nor oil seeds are sown as second crops. Wealthy men hire numerous helpers with bullocks and ploughs and often six to eight couples each with a plough sow simultaneously on one large field. This is possible because some families who possess no suitable fields raise no, or very small *rabi* crops themselves, and have therefore time to accept employment in other men's service. In the rains, on the other hand everyone is busy on his own fields, and it is difficult to hire labour. For sowing white jawari and wheat on heavy soil some people use not the ordinary plough and seed-drill, but the *tipun*, a sowing-plough with three coulter (Fig XXII). Two pairs of bullocks are needed to draw this plough, and the sower stands on the coulters board and drops the seed into a large funnel from which three bamboo tubes lead off to the coulters. Similar in construction is the lighter *mogra* a sowing plough with two coulters, also used for sowing wheat and white jawari. Cotton on the other hand is always sown with broad plough and seed drill.

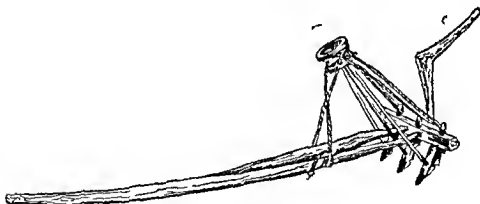


FIG XXII *Tipun* the sowing plough with three coulters

Besides the main food and cash-crops, most men plant some patches with *chillies* and egg plants, as soon as the maize is reaped, they transplant seedlings of tobacco grown near their houses, on manured garden plots. More care than on any other crop is bestowed on the young tobacco plants, they are watered morning and evening and protected by leaf-caps against the heat of the midday sun.

At the same time -

just ripening, must be guarding the job of field watcher get through the work of two

overlapping cultivating seasons. For now both the rain crop and the dry weather crop demand the cultivator's attention.

*Rice Harvest and Dassera Celebrations.*

The dark moon night between Akurpok and Divali, the month corresponding to September-October, is not the occasion for universal festivities. But certain *deshmukh* and members of raja families perform on that night a rite called Petre Amas in honour of the Departed. Twelve married couples eat at the dead of night and in complete silence a sacramental meal, and it is believed that the *sanal*, the spirits of the Departed, attend the ceremony and partake of their share in the meal.<sup>1</sup> This rite might be said to initiate a time when more than usual attention is paid to the spirits of the dead; the following months are considered particularly appropriate for the erection of memorials to the recently deceased relatives such as *munda* posts and flags, and it is perhaps not fortuitous that this time coincides with the ripening and harvesting of such rain crops as rice, jawari, millet and oil seeds.

The ritual eating of the new rice may be performed either before or after the full moon of Divali, but it must always precede the Dassera celebrations, which contrary to Hindu custom are not held on any particular calendrical date.<sup>2</sup> Compared to the Nowon of the small millets and the vegetables, it is a minor rite, predominantly domestic in character. The village *devari* offers the new rice to Aki Pen and Auwal, but no first fruits are offered in the rice fields. A few handfuls of new rice are reaped without any formality and cooked together with old rice. Any women may do the cooking, but the householder or a man of his clan offers the rice inside the kitchen to the Persa Pen and the ancestor-spirits,<sup>3</sup> praying:

Fourteen grandfathers, twelve  
fathers,  
Harken Departed, who dig for roots!  
Offerings we give you, as we eat the  
new rice.  
Come! wherever you may be on the  
hills,  
Wherever you may be in the grass,  
Wherever you may be under shrubs,  
Wherever you may be in the bushes,  
Come and eat.

*Chaudajank tadur, Parenḍajan babur,*

*Satur notur murmaṭi katster,  
mik yewi momoṭ nowon tintom.*

*miraṭ waraṭ guṭa taga mandkiṭ tere,*

*gaṭa taga mandkiṭ tere,  
podela taga mandkiṭ tere,  
podelat poro mandkiṭ tere,  
wara tint.*

The women then throw food offerings on leaves laid out on the roof as at the Nowon ceremonies for the small millets and say:

Come god of the kitchen corner,  
Come god of the roof,  
Seven sisters, goddesses

*Komṭa Pen wara  
Purli Pen wara  
selaṭ yeṭung Lachmi*

1. A detailed description of this rite shall be given in Book II.

2. The Dassera celebrations at Marlavai and Kanchanpalli which I attended in 1942 were held respectively on the 6th and 8th November, while the full moon of Divali was on the 20th October. In Marlavai the ritual new rice-eating took place on the 26th October.

3. At this rite not all the members of the phratries and sub-phratries eat together, but members of individual clans often assemble in the house of a prominent clansman.

Grain Goddess Cattle Goddess  
 Border Goddess House Goddess  
 All goddesses of good luck  
 Come and eat to you we offer

*Ana Lachmi Dhana Lachmi,  
 Siwa Lachmi Rota Lachmi,  
 ichong Lachmi  
 uaraṣ tinaṣ, mik sintom*

With the ritual eating of the new rice, the rice harvest begins. The field owner or a member of his household cuts a little rice and clearing a small patch in the middle of his field offers with the usual ritual sweetened *dal* to the Earth Mother, praying for her continued favour. Men and women and particularly the young men and girls reap the golden fields together, cutting the stalks with sickles two hands from the ground and tossing the bundles behind. They work in a line, at intervals gathering the bundles together and heaping them on the threshing floor (*khara*) a cow dunged patch inside or close by the field. There the rice is threshed with short wooden mallets, both men and women squatting to beat out the grain. The quantities of rice grown by the Gonds of the hills are not very great and I have never seen bullocks being used to tread it out.

At about the time the rice is harvested, one of the three annual rites in honour of the clan deities is celebrated, but nowadays this rite described in Chapter VI (p. 286), affects only the *katoya*, the Pargé containing the Persa Pen shrine. Dassera, it seems originally to have

association with the cult of the clan deities, it is rice that should be offered to the Persa Pen and rice which is used as ritual food during the celebrations, rice was planted by the hero Pahandi Kupar Lingal,<sup>1</sup> and rice was cooked by the divine ancestors of the Gonds at their mythical home Poropator Dhanegaon, and it is rice which figures prominently in the myth of the river crossing which explains the connection of the four brother clans with their totem.<sup>2</sup>

The Dassera ceremony is held

the prayers said disclose its original association with the eating of the new rice and it is still the occasion for the first use of the oil of the new harvest.

The most elaborate Dassera celebrations are held at the seat of Gond rajas, such as the rajas of Atram clan at Utnur and Kanchanpalli, but these will be discussed in connection with the position of rajas and the feudal system. In villages where no raja resides, it is the head man who performs the Dassera rites and the proceedings in Lachu Patel's house at Marhwaṣ can therefore be regarded as fairly typical.

The Diwali moon was already fast waning when one evening soon after sunset, several prominent men of the village assembled on Lachu

1 Cf p. 107

2 Cf p. 113

Patel's veranda. In the street four youths beat single-membrane drums outside the door and in a corner of the veranda a brass figure of Lachmi in the shape of a lamp-stand had been set up; leaning against the wall closeby were arranged swords, plough-shares, various other iron agricultural implements and cart-wheels, decorated with green leaves. Lachu Patel scattered vermilion on all the implements, anointed them with the new oil and set a fat-bellied marrow, golden and ripe, in front of the figure of Lachmi, standing it up on wooden legs like a toy-pig. He then burnt incense, took some new rice from a bundle and gave a few grains into the hands of all the men present. They formed a semi-circle and prayed:

New oil seed, new rice.

We are eating;

To you we offer it, may it reach you, ;

On the Dassera feast day;

May my hands and feet remain sound,

See that my crops prosper.

*Puna nung, puna wanji,*

*momot tintom;*

*mik watantom, mik yewi,*

*Dasserata puja,*

*ma tsokot kai kal wage mai,*

*mak panja palam tsokot sim.*

This prayer addressed to Lachmi the goddess of wealth and prosperity, requires no interpretation. Two cocks were then tested, and Kodapa Kasi—Marlavai's expert in beheading animals—took his sword and judging his distance slashed at the marrow, but failed to cut it in two; it wobbled and fell over. Lachu Patel then cut off the heads of the cocks and sprinkled their blood on all weapons and implements; then he handed the bleeding carcasses to two kinsmen who let the blood drop on the hearth-stones and the door-step. This ended the ceremony, but for the usual offering of the roast chicken-livers on the 'altar.' A few of the men stayed to partake of the chicken and rice, but most went to their own houses to have dinner with their families and eat cakes fried in the new oil.

### *The Dandari Dancing.*

When the dry-weather crops have been sown, the small millets, maize, and the rice are harvested and of all the rain crop only jawari, millet and oil seed still stand on the fields, there comes, about the end of Divali, the joyous time of Dandari. And what is to-day but a temporary lull before the cultivators' energies are absorbed by the guarding and weeding of the dry-weather crops must, in the old days when Gonds cultivated only rain crops, have been the beginning of a prolonged time of leisure. Food is now plentiful, perhaps more plentiful than at any other time of the year, and the sunny and yet cooler weather of late October and November brings a feeling of well-being and exuberance after all the damp and often stuffy weeks of the rains, with their clouds and leaden skies and the shadow of many an illness. All this is now over; on cool nights follow glorious breezy mornings with the dew sparkling on the millet stalks and blue mist rising from the valleys where vivid

greens have mellowed to yellow and gold. The grasses high on the hill sides are now a rolling sea of reddish tones, and as the days pass the solemnly drooping heads of the mullet turn from green to brown and from brown to gold.

The exhilarating effect of these first weeks of the cooler season is not lost on the Gonds and for two to three weeks after Dassera the whole countryside is possessed of the gay spirit of dance and song, bands of young people in their gayest attire journey from village to village with drums and horns, and wherever they go they are entertained as welcome and honoured guests. They are the Dandari dancers who perpetuate year after year the custom initiated by the legendary heroes Dundria Raur and Sipiserna Raur.

The epics of Pardhans and numerous songs lend sanction to the Dandari dancing and so much do Dundria Raur and Sipiserna Raur loom in the background of the whole Dandari festivities, that the myth of how they inaugurated the custom, though somewhat lengthy, must find its place in this chapter.

In Gudmasur Patera lived Raur,

Food is not wanting (he said),

Wealth we have plenty,

The gods gave it, nothing is lacking

To us the gods gave it,

No, the dance gods

Feast we will hold."

Brothers five the grandfathers

From their loins fourteen fathers,

Theirs were countless offspring

Ten throughout the village

The fruits of wombs were born,

Twenty-one sons were born

Twelve grand children were born

In Gudmasur Patera there lived

The tribe of Raur

Their priest was Pen Bupial

Sirivalaval katora

He was the god

The Raur folks Pardhan

Was Hirasuka

By the gods' grace we are free from  
want

Now let us hold a dance-feast

For nothing is lacking

Golden para drums let us make,

Today without fail let us make

Kettle drums of silver, said the Raur  
folk

Such days may not come again

Today we have gold

We may lack it tomorrow

Such days may not come again,

*Gudmasur Paterate Raur mantor*

*Tinle kami sile*

*dhan-daulat urta*

*pen sita, batat kami sile*

*mak nend pen sita kami sile*

*nend marat yetmasar penk*

*marat putuskat*

*Tandropo tamun siwar tadur,*

*ur pite chanda jank labur*

*saneta ueli sangantur*

*nend pahindita fir pandia*

*ura paidas ata*

*ekurs putralir paidas ater*

*paranda jank kuralir paidas ater*

*Gudmasur Paterat ropa*

*natin nagute nande mantar Raurk*

*urk katoral Pen Bupial katoral*

*Sirivalaval katora*

*Raitar ura manta*

*urk Raurk Pafari*

*Hirasuka Palari mantor*

*Nend pen sita batat kami sile*

*nend marat yetmasar tendkat*

*mak batat kami sile*

*saneta para tunkat*

*nend barabar tunkat*

*kurata turbul tungmar*

*Raurk inter ital diuos sile*

*nend manta sone*

*nati silache daiar*

*ital diuos sile,*



Such days as today;  
 Tomorrow we may be too poor  
 To make new *para*-drums;  
 Tomorrow we may have no gold  
 Tomorrow gold we may not have;  
 Today there is gold,  
 Tomorrow there may be none,  
 Poor may we become, and then have  
 no gold."

All the Raur folk asked:

"What shall we do?"

Now what shall we do?"

"Whom shall we call?"

Hirasuka, the Pardhan, we will call,

The wise Pardhan,

The thinker Pardhan,

That he may tell us.

The wise man we will fetch,

What he will counsel,

That let us do.

Let us go and fetch the Pardhan  
 Hirasuka.

When he is fetched he will give us  
 Wise counsel.

What he will tell,

That we will do."

Then they fetched Hirasuka.

Hirasuka grasped his spear,

Shouldered his fiddle Hirabai.

The spear in his hand,

Hirasuka entered the palace,

Bowed, touching the ground:

"Lord, I salute you."

His patron's wife heard the wise man,

In a brass-pot she took water,

Brought it to Hirasuka:

"Here, father Pardhan, take water."

In a flat bowl,

The old Pardhan took the water,

Brought Hirabai the fiddle,

And washed the fiddle's leg,

Then washed his own feet.

A mat for sitting on

She gave him.

"Hirasuka, sit down,

Rest on the mat."

Leaf-pipe and tobacco

Gave his patron,

Gave Raur to Hirasuka.

A pipe he then smoked.

"Grandfather Pardhan,

We Raur have one problem,

In which I lack knowledge,

*ital nend diwos sile;*

*munc gharib asi danir*

*para niwuri kiteke;*

*narita sone putweke daiar.*

*naŕi putweke daiar.*

*nend sone manta,*

*naŕi sile,*

*gharib akaŕ sone putweke daiar.*

*Samdir Raurk inter;*

*bahan tungana,*

*inge bahan tungana?*

*bon keiana,*

*Hirasukaŕ Paŕaŕi keimar,*

*akakwanti Paŕaŕi,*

*budiwantal Paŕaŕi;*

*manje wor wehanur.*

*akal pimar,*

*bahan wehanur*

*ahan kenjkaŕ.*

*sont Raurk Hirasuka Paŕaŕin Keisi*  
*taraŕ.*

*Keisi tat paŕa manje wor wehtap:*

*Gohti karal.*

*manje bahan wehanur,*

*ahan kenjkom.*

*Hirasukan keisi tater,*

*kaniat gorka pitor Hirasuka*

*Hirabai kikri setate kanjtor,*

*kaidc kaniat gorka pitor,*

*Hirasukaŕ andargand deogand wator,*

*jahar tungtor;*

*bapu diwan jahar.*

*Akakwanti wona daitaŕ kenjta,*

*kohmandal jarite yer pita*

*Hirasukank tata;*

*ide Paŕaŕi baba yer yeta.*

*Anpurial jari,*

*Paŕaŕi waril yer yetor,*

*Hirabai kikritun tator,*

*tana kal nortor*

*norsi tanwa kalk nortor*

*Norsi sukowaisal chapra sita,*

*wonk sita.*

*Hirasuka uda,*

*Sukowaisal chapra taga uda.*

*Chuta aki tamuk*

*dhani sitor,*

*Raur sitor Hirasukan sitor*

*Chuta unjer mantor.*

*Paŕaŕi tado,*

*Raurk undi gohti manta,*

*puŕta tan ropo nak kare maior*

'The dance gods' feast we will hold,  
The Raur folk have said,  
But I know not how to proceed  
The Pardhan let us call they said,  
'So that he may advise us'  
Grandfather, Pardhan,  
These people all say  
This and that word  
What ge'd there is let's make into  
drum

To us the gods gave it nothing is  
lacking  
Diamonds and pearls we have plenty,  
Golden drums let us make,' they  
say  
Silver kettle -drums let us make' they  
say,  
Such days may not come again  
What the future brings we know not  
'Hirasuka let us call'  
So they all say Now you the  
Clever Pardhan you tell us'  
The clever Pardhan then spoke  
'For the dance feast of gods  
Sacred rites we must hold  
Quickly, make five measures of cakes  
Make five measures of bread  
Look five measures of grain—  
These shall the Raur take with them,  
Horned goats with white foreheads  
Spurred cocks with flat combs  
All these you shall take  
Then bring five pots of liquor

The first of the brew and the weaker  
liquor

Carrying all these go at once  
Deep into the forest of Rajalgondi,  
Over seven hills and valleys then go,  
The tree Raichandan then sell  
But first you shall worship the gods  
The rite for the tree you shall hold,  
Then you shall sacrifice,  
Spurred cocks with flat combs,  
Make them peck grain  
Horned goats with white foreheads,  
Make them tremble,  
Then you shall worship,  
Behold goats and cut cocks

Then let the tree Raichandan,  
And at once shall the craftsmen,  
Carve out the drum shells,

jetmasar penk tunkom inter,  
ur Raurk putuskom inter,  
nak kare maia,  
Patara keui tarat,  
manje aor uehanur  
Patara tado,  
air lokur samdir inter  
takemata gohti inter,  
te bore soneta para tunkat

mah pen sita batar kami sile

hure, mati, kankark ghegal manta,  
soneta para tunkat inter,

kureta turburi, tunkat inter,

ital de cos sile,  
sile aske mune kare maia,  
Hirasukan keui tarat  
iteke tanropo akalaanti  
Patara andi uehanur  
ganuanti Patara inter,  
jetmasar penk,  
penk tungmar mandar  
Alet, nyung gadana garbang tungmar,  
nyung gadana ni saring tungmar,  
nyung gadana ghato tungmar,  
tungi faja Raurk pimar,  
lakh uatang chandralik bakrang,  
arekh uatang gogring chumeralik,  
gogring pimar  
Tanropo marla nyung gagring kal  
lamar  
kandikal, lapur kal,

jin sanmar nend barabar,  
Rajalgandit ropo sonmar  
jerung metana sandit rapo sonmar,  
Raichandan mara naskmar  
tana penk tungmar,  
marala fuja tungmar,  
manja fuja dosmar,  
arekh uatang chumeralik  
gogring kotumar,  
lakh uatang bakrang chandralik,  
bakrang jarta nusmar,  
ni faja fuja tungmar,  
bakrang naskmar gogring  
ailmar,  
aski faja nend Raichandan mara  
naski faja torone uadir chekmar,  
fara niure mata kimar,

Then to the village return."  
 (Thus spoke Hirasuka,  
 And so was it done).  
 Arrived in the village they stretched  
 Hides across the drums' faces,  
 And the *para*-drums were ready;  
 Of *Kursi*<sup>1</sup> wood they made kettle-  
 drums,  
 But the tone of these drums was not  
 good  
 "Our *para* are ready and right  
 But a failure are our kettle-drums,  
 What shall we do, oh grandfather?  
 What shall we do, a failure they are?  
 What shall we do, whom shall we ask?  
 Oh, Hirasuka Pardhan,  
 The kettle-drums don't ring true,  
 In future ages, in grandson's times,  
 How will it be?"  
 (Then spoke Hirasuka):  
 "The Gond gods are wicked,  
 They are uncontrollable,  
 Twelve threshing floors of Gond  
 gods,  
 Thirty threshing floors of Telugu  
 gods,  
 Thirty-two threshing floors of Maratha  
 gods,  
 They can't be controlled."  
 (Then asked Dundria Raur):  
 "Now what shall I do?"  
 Let us then defile  
 These Akara drums,  
 A menstruating woman shall touch  
 them,  
 Then the tone of the kettle-drums  
 shall be right;  
 And buying new shells from the potter,  
 We will span them with hide, and  
 Let them be touched by an unclean  
 woman,  
 On them her shadow shall fall,  
 Thus the force that resists will be  
 broken.  
 In future ages, among the four tribes,  
 This shall be done, and the tone of  
 the drums shall be good."  
 A menstruating woman touched them,  
 Under her touch the drums sounded  
 well,  
 Ready they were, and right they were,

1. *Gmelina arborea*.

*kisi nahin nagure waimar.*  
*Nate tat paja mustar,*  
*para sade mata,*  
*kursi marata turburi tungmar,*  
*tungt paja sade maio,*  
*mawa para sade mata,*  
*bati turburi sade maio,*  
*badwitsar tunkat, dada?*  
*badwitsar tunkat, sade maio,*  
*aske badwitsar tunkat, bon pusi kiana.*  
*Hirasuka Patari,*  
*turburi sade maio,*  
*muneta yog aiar, pehulpar*  
*aiar, aiar manje?*  
*Koya wasi penk phera nadan mantang,*  
*manje aure maiong,*  
*Parenda khara koya wasi penk,*  
*tisa khara Telinga penk*  
*batis khara kos Maratha penk*  
*aske aure maiwalir aiong.*  
*Manje bahan kika?*  
*Manje tan ropo,*  
*ide akaratun bahiti kiana,*  
*wondilata weilon itusana*  
*aske sade maiar turburi,*  
*kuma nagatal puna werni tater,*  
*wernitun mutsmar,*  
*tokur ata weilon itusmar*  
*tana darmi lagusmar,*  
*lagust paja tana niyat jara bhang*  
*anta.*  
*muneta yogun ropo, nalung*  
*kumkun ropo,*  
*id takana; aske wefe sade mata.*  
*Toknyata weilon toro itusmar*  
*itust paja wefe sade mata;*  
*sade mata, asal ata,*

' Now they are ready, now let us  
 dance,  
 There is no danger in dancing"  
 So in all the four tribes  
 Akara drums were made ready  
 Then said the Raur folk  
 ' Where shall we take our *para* drums?  
 Where dance the dance of greeting?<sup>1</sup>  
 "To Gunreo, to Padmalpur the  
 grandmother,  
 To her will we go, taking all Raur"  
 Then rose the sound of *dapna* drums,  
 And they went to Padmalpur,  
 Arrived they danced the dance of  
 greeting  
 Then sat together in friendly  
 gathering,  
 A meal for gods was prepared  
 After eating and drinking,  
 The smoke of hookahs began to rise,  
 Pipes of bent leaves were passed  
 round  
 Cracking they broke betel nuts,  
 Coloured smoke curled up  
 Then at Padmalpur's place,  
 They danced the dance of greeting  
 As they were leaving the Raur  
 received presents,  
 Five diamonds, five pearls,  
 Five mohurs, they rose for the formal  
 embrace,  
 Then the Dandari bade farewell  
 Afterwards whose Dandari came?  
 After Dundria Raur's going  
 Who performed the greeting dance  
 At Padmalpur's place?  
 Seven Paniur brothers came,  
 Dance drums bringing, they came,  
 "Let us take *para*-drums, and  
 Also go to Padmalpur,  
 Let us also dance the dance of  
 greeting,  
 When we have danced and received  
 Hospitality, then let's return"  
 (Thus spoke the Paniur brothers)  
 Six Bonda Voja brothers  
 Came with their dance-drums,  
 Came to Padmalpur,  
 They too were welcomed,  
 After them, who came?  
 From Bamni Baran,

*inge marat yend kat mange sade mata,*

*yendteke batai tap sile,  
 sile asle nalung lumkun topo  
 akara mure mata  
 inge Raurk,  
 para бага uakat?  
 man kala sisi uakat,  
 Gunreo Padmalpur lako*

*tanaga sanmay Raurk uoimar  
 Bata para kanki dapna sarang anta,  
 ncid soter Padmalpur naga,  
 sonji man kola siter,*

*nta para ram saba sadur saba,*

*deolokura khana ata,  
 tinmar unmar, ata para,  
 janjari hukana, pulau sute mata,  
 uakrial chutana sur tirianta*

*supari karar woranta,  
 kala jila dul turanta  
 Nendu Padmalpur naga,  
 man kola siter,  
 Raurk dakam inge*

*siyung hirang siyung mating,  
 siyung mohur kahlen Raurk tayar  
 ater,  
 kalit para dandari sur ata,  
 Ata para bona dandari wanta,  
 Dundria Raurta soneke  
 man kola siter,  
 man kola Padmalpur naga siter?  
 tamun yeyur Paniur wanter,  
 ur unde akara pin wanter,  
 para pin Padmalpur naga,  
 marat unde dakat,  
 marat unde man kola sikat,*

*sikat ani uakat  
 tana man yetkat uakat*

*Tamun sarur Kainda Vojaris,  
 ura akara wanta,  
 uata para Padmalpur naga wanter,  
 ura unde man ata,  
 Ata para bona wanta?  
 Nend Bamnitur Baran,*

<sup>1</sup> *Man kola* also called *sar kola* is the first dance performed when the Dandari dancers visit a village it is interpreted as a solemn salutation of the hosts

Brothers four brought dance drums,  
And *gumela* pot-drums,  
To Padmalpuri they came,  
And also danced the dance of greeting.  
Then (said Padmalpuri) ;

"Tomorrow as to-day there will be  
dances,  
But shall for ever only men dance?  
Shall women not dance in future?"  
Thus said Padmalpuri, the grand-  
mother,

To whom did she say it?

"You Manko, you take the drums  
out,

You start the dancing,  
In all times to come  
Women too will dance the Dandari."  
Among the four kin-groups,  
Among the four tribes,  
Women and men  
Dance now the Dandari,  
In all the four tribes  
The dancing goes on.

*tamun nalwir ur unde akara,*  
*gumela pisi wanter,*  
*wata paja Padmalpuri naga wanter,*  
*ura unde man kola ata,*  
*Ata paja*

*nend narita yetmasar,*  
*narita mandatira aiar?*  
*weilokna aiweke daiar?*  
*Padmalpuri kaka inta,*

*bon inta?*

*Nend Manko, nime akara sar tenda*

*nime Manko tenda,*  
*munc waio diwos aske*  
*weilokna dandari pesiana,*  
*Nalung sagank,*  
*nalung kumkun*  
*welio mansa*  
*dandari takana*  
*nalung kumkun ropo*  
*takana taki.*

This legend recited by Pardhans and more or less well known to every Gond, lends the dancing during the Dandari time the highest possible sanction.<sup>1</sup> For it tells how the making of dance-drums (*akara*) and the visits of troupes of dancers to friendly villages was initiated by Dundria Raur, the most prominent ancestor of the five-brother clans, and by Manko, who is to-day revered as a deity of the five-brother phratry. The legend relates, moreover, that the example of the Raur folk was quickly followed by the seven Panior brothers, Koinda Voja and his six-brother folk, and ultimately the four-brother-folk from Kel-char Bamni. Thus every Gond sees in the Dandari dancing a custom cherished already by his mythical ancestors, and considers it not only a joyous entertainment, but the fulfilment of a religious obligation. For Dundria Raur and his brother Sipiserma Raur, who is not specifically mentioned in the above version of the legend, are revered not only by the five-brother clans, but by all Gonds as demi-gods and patrons of the Dandari dancers, and as such are referred to as Yetmasar Penk, *i.e.*, as dance gods.

There is a small *gumela* song telling of Raur's dancing and first encounter with Manko, an episode which ranks among the favourite themes of Gond poetry.

"Whose Dandari are these, granny?"

"The five brothers' Dandari, child,  
You remain in the inner room child,

*Ade bona dandari kakowo?*  
*Tamun siwira dandari biyewo,*  
*Nime bhirate maneki biyeha,*

1. It is not the only legend explaining the origin of the Dandari celebrations; another myth has been recounted in Chapter IV (p. 164) and there exist yet other stories about the first Dandari; Dundria Raur and Manko play in many of them important roles.

Leave the cakes in the frying pan  
The grandmother hid the girl  
Fastened firmly the door  
Great rascals are the Raur folk,  
child

The Akara dance the Raur began  
Like birds danced the Raur folk,  
With steps like the tripping of uti  
birds  
The play of the dancing girls the Raur  
folk mimicked

Manko peeped out from the inner  
room,

With a thorn she made a hole  
Inside Manko started laughing  
Startled, Raur listened

Give me fire girl  
Taken aback Manko heard him,  
How should she give him fire?  
In her hollowed hand she took  
burning coal

Out came the girl Manko,  
Marvelling stood Raur,  
Took out a small scarf,  
Tied up the burning coal

*Jaſatang garkang titaten man  
Banne ropo sorusar kako  
Umsi lati doha lata kako  
Phera pappalir Raurhe biye*

*Akara sar piana Raur,  
Papina ſarjal atere, Raurk  
uti ina korjal atere, Raurk*

*Bogan khel tenda latere Raurk*

*Bhivatal sura lata Manko,*

*Kachkure ghadi tungana Manko  
ropodale kaua lata nende Manko  
Nehna kenja latore Raur  
Mak tarmi sime ki bai  
Nehna kenja lata Manko  
bahan tarmi sare bai  
horopne ghokang ſiar Manko,*

*Kai peshua lata bai Manko  
nehna sura lator Raur,  
sapure sela uodana Raur  
tarmi gals hia latere Raur*

I have already quoted the prayer addressed to Dundria Raur and Sipiserma Raur on the occasion of the Akari rites (p. 349). Then the Akara drums are taken out and from that day on they may be played every night until the end of the Dandari time. The possession of Akara drums is a hereditary privilege, and though anyone may play them only men with a hereditary right may own either *gumela* or *para* drums. The *para* are of iron, and the *gumela* are of wood.

for  
hos

and this is often a fairly expensive task, however, this rule is not very strictly observed, and if the owners of drums are poor, the headmen and other officials

Dandari  
though no  
drums with  
or suffering

The *ka*

*turbuli* as drums carved by the Raur folk themselves from the wood of trees, and later *werni*, earthen drum shells as bought by them from a potter. *Para* are small double membrane drums, slightly thickening in the middle, and are played with the fingers of both hands the player sitting cross legged and resting the drum against one knee. *Turbuli*, also known as *wete*, are saucer shaped, single membrane drums made of wood, burnt clay or iron, usually not more than ten inches in

diameter; they are beaten with two slender splinters of bamboo. Although in the legend wooden *turbuli* are mentioned, nowadays Gonds use the earthen type, purchasing the clay bowl known as *werni*, from local potters, or similarly shaped iron shells made by a blacksmith.

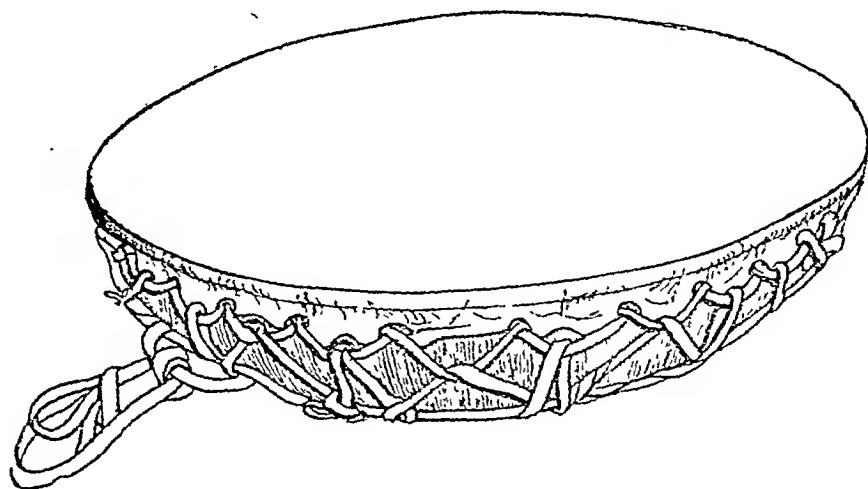


FIG. XXIII. *Turbuli* or *Wete* drum.

A remarkable feature of the legend is the means whereby *turbuli* drums, at first unsuccessful, were righted by the touch of a menstruating woman; and this is chiefly remarkable because menstruating women generally defile ritual objects and are debarred from participation in any ceremonial activity; the idea being perhaps to neutralize one evil by another. Up to this day the Gonds follow the advice which Hirasuka, the wise Pardhan, gave to the Raur folk, and every new *wete* drum is touched by a menstruating woman. Drums of an altogether different type are the *gumela*, mentioned in the legend as brought by the four-brother folk from Bamni, but not used by any other Dandari dancers. *Gumela* are bulbous bottle-drums of burnt clay with a single membrane spanning the open base. The membrane is beaten with the palm of the right hand, while the left hand alternatively opens and closes the narrow-necked opening. They are always played in pairs and as an accompaniment of dance songs and have an extremely soft tone (Fig. 78). Tradition tells that originally *gumela* were only owned by men of four-brother clans and later by their *soira*, men of seven-brother clans, but nowadays these distinctions are no longer in force and *gumela* are to be found with men of any phratry. But I know of no man who owns both *para* and *gumela*; with each *para* and each pair of *gumela* are associated one or two *wete*-drums.

Any time between the Akari rite and the beginning of the Dandari time new drums may be made, and as soon as the Akari day is past any member of a family with the traditional rite of keeping *para*, who wants

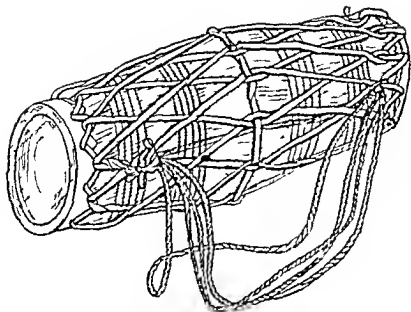


FIG XXIV Para drum

to make a new drum searches for a suitable *kursi* tree,<sup>1</sup> and if no *kursi* tree is to be found, for a *vengun* tree,<sup>2</sup> for only the fine grained woods of these two trees are considered suitable. He then invites a few friends, and particularly a man clever in wood carving to assist him in the felling, and taking a chicken, some grain, fried cakes and bread, goes with them to the forest. There the chosen tree is once more scrutinized, for not every *kursi* or *vengun* tree will do, it should have a hollow running from the base upwards, and it is the section containing this hollow which is used for the drum shell. When they have decided on the tree, the ground in front is cleared and the prospective drum owner puts some grains of incense on glowing wood and waves it close to the trunk, invoking the help of the dance gods

Agrun Bagrun five brothers  
Sipiserni Raur, Dundria Raur  
Look! to you we offer, Akara gods  
Dance gods  
Give us luck and good fortune,  
May our children be well,  
Give us good fortune

Agrun Bagrun tamun suir penk  
Sipiserni Raur, Dundria Raur,  
sura! mik sintom Akara penk,  
Yemana penk,  
mak tsokot arkat barlat mak yes  
barat mak mari may tsokot,  
mandana, mak barlat nana

He takes some red powder and draws a vertical line and then as many blobs on the trunk as his clan has *uen*, he distributes rice or

<sup>1</sup> *Gmel na u borea*

<sup>2</sup> *Pterocarpus Marsupium*



millet among those present; standing before the tree all pray:

Dundria Raur, Yetmasar Penk,  
Your rite we perform,  
Grant us your favour.

*Dundria Raur, Yetmasar Penk,  
nik puja dosantom,  
mak tsoko! pahti man.*

The chicken is then put through the grain-eating test; its head is severed with a knife and placed before the tree, while the owner holds the carcass against the trunk so that the blood makes a large red patch on the bark. The chicken-liver is roasted and is offered before the tree together with some millet bread; the prospective drum-owner then throws a few grains of millet and *dal* up into the branches. After carrying smouldering incense round the tree, he embraces it, pressing first his right and then his left shoulder against the trunk, then he folds his hands again in reverence and says: "Ram, Ram." The embracing of the tree is repeated by the two men who will actually fell it. One of them takes up his axe and gives the first blow on the patch reddened by blood and vermilion, and with that and each subsequent stroke of the axe he pronounces a wish, such as 'may we remain in good health!' 'may my fields prosper!' 'may my cattle multiply!' and so on for the first six or seven strokes.

When the tree falls, a section is cut from the trunk and carried to the village, where any experienced craftsman carves the shell. When this is ready, membranes of shaved and dried goat's hide or the skin of any wild animal are stretched over the drum-ends and held taut by criss-cross leather thongs of cow and goat hide.

When purchasing *gumela* or *wete* from a potter, the buyer gives the potter a chicken, some grain and nowadays often also cash. No ceremony is performed before the drum is ready, that is before the goat skin membranes have been attached by iron hoops and leather thonging, but the playing of the new *gumela*, like that of *para* and *wete*, must be preceded by a sacrifice in honour of Dundria Raur, the patrons of dance and song and at this time the *gumela* and *wete* must be touched by a menstruating woman.

In preparation of this rite the new Akara drums are touched informally by a woman in her period, and are laid together with all other drums and dance-sticks (which the owner may happen to possess) on a white cloth spread out on the place used for dancing. The drums are screened by a cloth stretched round three or four stakes, and behind this screen the owner conducts the rites. He brings a chicken, some cooked food and the usual requisites for offerings. He first sprinkles the drum with water and then with vermilion and powdered turmeric; if a new *para* has been made he drops a little vermilion powder into the small hole in its shell. Then those present stand up in a semi-circle, grain is distributed and all once more invoke Dundria Raur, Sipiserma Raur and all the dance gods, praying that the drums may sound well and no harm may befall the dancers,

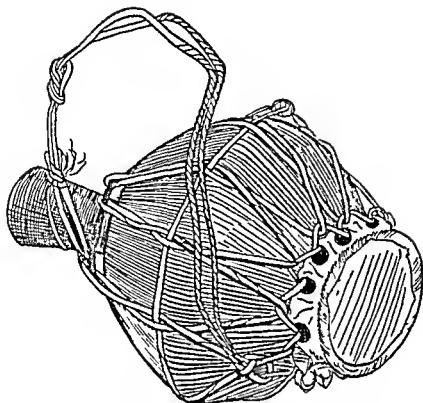


FIG. 111. *Gumiela* drum with a flask shaped body of potter's clay and a membrane of goat's hide

Then the owner, functioning as priest sacrifices the chicken and sprinkles the blood on the drums. The liver is roasted and offered together with some cooked grain. Then four or five young boys are asked to sit down inside the screen and the owner serves the sacrificial food on leaf plates. When they have finished eating, a hole is dug in front of the drums and there the chicken's head with all the remains of the food and offerings are buried and a wooden peg is driven into the hole. Lastly the drums are taken up and the screen removed. The owner places his right heel on the place where the peg rests in the earth and swings round on his heel in an anti-clockwise direction. This is repeated by all the prospective dancers present, and is believed to endow them with swiftness and vigour in dancing.

When all have gone through this performance, the drums are beaten for the first time and the boys dance symbolically a few steps. The drums are then taken to the owner's house whence they are fetched whenever the young folk of the village feel like dancing.

Besides the two deified ancestors now so closely connected with the Dandari dancing, there are several other dance gods who receive occasional worship. Yetmasar Pen is the god of the dance *par excellence*; by some he is considered a male god playing a big cylindrical drum such as is taken on dancing excursions and played on the way and when entering the village, but not to accompany singing and dancing. Yetmasar Pen is attended by Agrusi and Bagrusi, two gods said to wear huge head-dresses of peacock feathers, such as are worn by the *gusari*, the masked Gond dancers, who accompany all dance expeditions.

According to a wide-spread belief, the Dandari gods watch jealously over the performance of the traditional rites and dances in their honour, and if the owner of a set of Akara drums fails with the offerings before embarking on the annual dancing, these gods are likely to appear in his dreams and remind him of his duty. If he makes excuses, pointing to his poverty or lack of supplies, they set the thatch of his house alight, which though invisible from outside burns furiously in the interior until he promises to start dancing and to proffer the usual gifts; then the fire disappears without leaving a trace.

This belief in the enchanted fire which the Dandari gods produce when their cult is neglected is perhaps linked with the tradition, not contained in the above version of the legend, which tells how the Raur folk, who originally owned neither dance-masks nor head-dresses, went to Birnandi Guru in Naukanpatar Dip and received from him beautiful head-dresses (*kalkituro*) that looked like flaming fire. Nowadays these fiery head-dresses are hats with waving and glittering peacock-plumes.

After this diversion into the realm of legend, we must return to the present and observe the sequence of events from the opening rite of the Dandari time to its ceremonial close, when drums and head-dresses are stowed away till next year's dancing season.

The opening rite, called Bogi, is usually performed about the time of the Divali dark moon, but not by all villages on the same day. However long it is delayed, Divali may not be celebrated until it has taken place, and it is no unusual occurrence for both rites to be celebrated several days after the end of the Divali month. Bogi day is moreover the customary time for offering the first-fruits of the great millet to Hura Pen.

When I saw the Bogi rite in Marlavai it was done on the day after the Divali new moon. It was in the morning, and no one in the village was allowed to eat until the rite had been completed. There were two sets of Akara drums in Marlavai, both consisting of one *para* and two earthen *turbuli*. One set belonged to Kanaka Kodu, the *devari*, and the other to Soyam Maru. Kodu's drums were taken out from his house and several young men, including his brother Hanu, painted the membranes with crude designs in white and red: they marked the *para* faces with a cross in red, drawing a circle in the centre of each quarter. Similar was the design on the *turbuli* and even the big single membrane

drums (*dapna*) which are used throughout the year were decorated with drawings, their large membranes offered more scope to the artist, who after crossing them into four quarters filled each with irregular constellations of circles and rough figures of animals. The painting completed all the drums and one feather head dress, together with the dance sticks, were grouped in the centre of the *mandop* before Kodu's house, which had been the scene of the Persa Pen rites and which was to serve during Dandari time as the—rather narrow—place for most dances. Kodu the owner of the Akara drums, brought a brass dish containing cooked new rice, leaves of the standing millet and sprigs of the season's bean crop as well as incense and other ritual necessities. He sprinkled water on the drums and burnt incense, then he laid out the leaves in a line before the drums and holding some cooked rice in his hand prayed silently

Spirima Raur Dundria Raur  
On Bogi day we give you a  
Food offering may you accept it

Sifuserma Raur, Dundria Raur,  
bogita divos nik mamot  
nɛɔd sintom, niɪ ʒeɪɪ

Then he scattered the rice on the leaves and made a reverence before the drums. The young men present saluted the drums in turn. Alone Kodu in his capacity of *devari*, made the round of the village deities scattering food offerings before the Akɪ Pen the Village Mother and the stone of Podi Auwal, repeating everywhere more or less the same prayer in the name of the appropriate deity.

When he returned to the *mandop* the young men took up the drums, each in turn put his heel on the peg in the centre of the dance place and spun round on it, then they began to beat the *dapna* drums, while Kodu and two boys played on *para* and *turbuli* in the veranda of his house. A small number of young men and boys began to dance the stick dance, but it was nearly midday, all were hungry and the performance was only just long enough to serve as a symbolic beginning of the Dandari season.

Simultaneously Soyam Maru, the second owner of Akara drums in Marlavai, performed the same rite in his own courtyard.

Later in the day each householder cut five jawari ears from his field and gave them to Kodu, as *devari* of the village. Kodu took them to the mahua tree, where both Chenchu Bhimana and the Hura Pen have their sacred stones. Hura means jawari ear, but the Hura Pen is more frequently referred to as Natna Persa Pen the 'great god of the village,' or Persa Bhimana. In front of a small crowd the *devari* placed the millet ears before the sacred stones, sacrificed a chicken and invoked Hura Pen

New ears we give you  
We eat them  
Give us good fortune

Puna hura nik sintom  
mamot sintom  
makɪsokoɪ barbat sim

Kodu then returned the ears to the villagers who cooked them in their houses and offered the grain at the *pen komta*; but his own he roasted on an open fire, offering some to the god under the mahua tree and eating the rest together with the few men present at the rite.

In the late evening of that day, the people of Marlavai celebrated Divali. This was definitely a domestic affair, each family acting independently, and the rites closely resembled the second phase of the Pola ceremony. For as at Pola, the plough-bullocks stood in the centre of the ritual. There was no common act of worship, but the women of every household lit all iron lamps and made small oil lamps of stiff rice-dough which they placed on either side of the house-doors and on the edges of the verandas. All along the village-streets lights flickered as the men of each household brought their bullocks, many decorated

with coloured fringes and tassels, from the cattle sheds. Patterns of flour were drawn in the courtyard on which the bullocks, pair by pair, were made to stand. The wife of the house brought a brass plate with a light and some uncooked rice, waved the light before the bullocks and sprinkled them with rice. Then she greeted them by touching the ground with knees and forehead, and fed them with cooked grain from a winnowing fan. The day closed with a family meal of special food: *dal*-cakes fried in oil, wheat-cakes filled with sugar and the other delicacies, which are a distinctive feature of most domestic celebrations and all those feasts which are evidently of Hindu origin. For the choice food at true Gond feasts consists of meat and not of sweetened and fried cakes.

Marlavai had not long to wait before it was caught in the flood-tide of Dandari. On the evening after Bogi day, when the cattle had returned home and dusk had settled over the fields of high, rustling millet, the long drawn out blast of a horn rang across the valley. "Dandari are coming!" shouted the boys excitedly. Villagers returning from the fields soon brought the news that a large band of dancers from Busimetta, a village standing in manifold marriage relations with Marlavai, was resting by the stream and waiting for night to fall before making a formal entry into the village.

Hurriedly preparations for the visitors' reception were made, and the rasping of mill-stones soon told that the women had settled down to their task of grinding grain for a large meal. The Marlavai drums were taken out in readiness and hung up in the *mandop*.

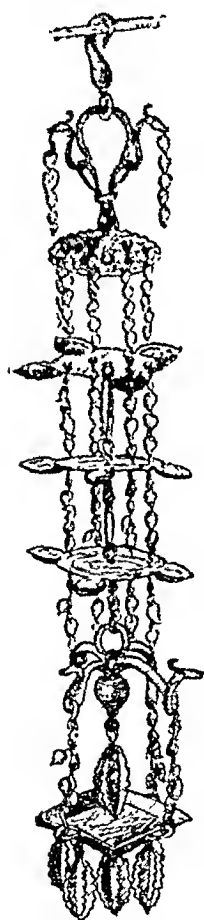


FIG. XXVI.  
An elaborate form  
of hanging lamp  
such as is lit  
at Divali.

When it was quite dark the horn boomed again and now it was followed by the hard roll of drums, growing louder and coming steadily nearer. In the fields below the village two flickering lights wound through the millet, soon they were at the entrance to the village where groups of thrilled children stood watching against the fence. As the procession came up the narrow lane to the dance place the Marlavai drums roared a welcome. At a great pace and in single file came the Dandari dancers: first torch bearers and musicians, three young boys with *dapna* drums slung over their shoulders, another with a kettle drum hung on a strap round his neck, and a Pardhan trumpeting on a huge metal horn. Then came the dancers with jingling anklets and sparkling silver ornaments: the small boys dressed up as girls with blanket hoods covering their *sari* tied skirt like, bodices<sup>1</sup> and scarves knotted under the chin, and after them the young men wearing *dhoti*, shirts and coats and lots of glittering jewellery. Two young men carried *gumela* drums, and earthen *turbuli* hung on the shoulders, but these were not played during the formal entry. The few older men who had accompanied the Dandari dancers came last, walking staff in hand, but there were no women among the visitors.



FIG. XXVII *Dapna* drum

As the procession closed in on the *mandap* before Kanaka Kodu's house, the young men of Marlavai intensified their welcome, beating kettle and *dapna* drums. The visiting drummers ranged themselves beside the shelter, and both sets of drums thundered simultaneously as the last of the long line of Dandari guests filed in.

<sup>1</sup> This dress is peculiar to the masquerade of the Dandari dancers. Gond girls and women never wear *sari* in this fashion and seldom bodices.

When all had arrived, the drumming died away, and the Busimetta men hung their kettle drum on one of the *mandop* posts in token of their visit. A foot-stool and a pot of water were brought outside the *mandop* and the wives of Soyam Chitru and Kanaka Kodu, the two drum owners of Marlavai, stood ready to wash the visitors' feet. With great ceremony the prominent young men of Marlavai, Sonu, the patel's son, Kanaka Kodu's younger brother and a few others, functioned as ushers: taking the guests by either hand two ushers led them one by one to the women and, after water had been poured over their feet and solemn salutations exchanged between women and guests, the ushers again took the guests by the hands and led them to their seats on cots, blankets and mats which had all been arranged round the dance-place. Some of the ushers picked up the smallest guests and carried them in their blanket hoods to their places. The whole ceremony was conducted with the greatest decorum and observance of etiquette. It was, however, only the Dandari dancers who were led to their seats in this way, the accompanying drummers had their feet washed, but found their own places.

When all were seated there was a moment of silence, as the hosts distributed leaves and tobacco. Pieces of smouldering wood were handed round and soon the red glow of leaf-pipes shone from the rows of guests. At that moment, the Kanaka men, Kodu, his brother Hanu, the *kaṭoṛa* Lachu and Ramu, Lachu Patel's son-in-law, came from Kodu's house and together walked up to the Dandari guests; with folded hands they greeted them with the traditional greeting:

Ram, Ram are you all well  
Are all your sons and daughters well?

*Ram, Ram, samdir tsokoṭ mantiṭ,  
mari miar tsokoṭ mantiṭ?*

And the guests replied *unisono*:

Ram Ram, we are all well;  
our sons and daughters are well.

*Ram, Ram samdir tsokoṭ  
mantom, mari miar tsokoṭ manter.*

Again the hosts asked:

Mother and father are they all well?

*Baye babal tsokoṭ mantiṭ?*

And once more the guests answered:

We all, sons and daughters, father  
and mother are well.

*Momot samdir mari miar  
babal baye tsokoṭ mantom.*

Only after this formal greeting did guests and hosts mingle to chat and gossip, the men of Marlavai sitting here and there beside their friends and relations from Busimetta. There were no women to be seen, for they were busy grinding grain and preparing the feast. But children sat about under the eaves of houses and on Kodu's veranda, while the smallest clung to their fathers sitting in the crowd.

The two young men with the *gumela* and a few good singers had arranged themselves on a special mat covered with blankets, close to a big fire and they now tightened their drum membranes by the warmth of the flames. At the first notes of the soft toned drums, the dancers took up their dance sticks, well turned batons of *kaur* wood, some of which had brass embossed handles, they formed a circle under

slow steps the dancers began moving anti clockwise, all the time facing inwards and crossing the feet over as they travelled sideways, clicking sticks first their own sticks together, then with the right neighbour, then together, then with the left neighbour. Thus began the greeting dance, called the *man kola* or *sar kola* because it opens and ends any visit of Dandari dancers. After the circle had come back to its original position, the girls in the dance called *pori* (chicken), stood still and the young men in the dance called *mau* (sambar), stepped in front of them and clicking sticks in passing moved on one place, this was repeated until the round of the circle was made. Then all dancers bent low, and with sticks touching the ground advanced with small steps eastwards, as it is said, in the name of the gods then turning they went westwards, then northwards, then southwards, having greeted the gods of all directions they reformed their circle and laying the sticks at their feet clapped their hands in time to the song.

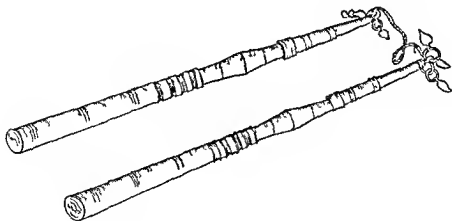


FIG XXVIII Dance sticks with brass handles



To this the musicians sang in soft voices one of the melodious songs called *gumela* after the two pottery drums beaten in accompaniment. They are part-songs, one group starting the verse and the second taking it up at the end of the phrase and singing it to the end of the line:

*Dena, dena, dedena, dena dada,*  
What days are coming, my brother?  
Great Bhawe is coming, my brother,  
Thereafter what day is coming,  
brother?

Bur Bhawe is coming, my brother.  
Thereafter what day is coming, my  
brother?

Akari day, once a year, oh brother,  
The five brothers, the grandfathers,  
my brother.

Let us start the dance-feast, my  
brother.

From fathers and grandfathers' time  
hails the custom, brother,  
The custom was started by them, my  
brother.

They began the dance-feast, brother,  
Horned goats were killed and offered,  
Sweetened dal was offered, my  
brother.

*Dena, dena, dena, dedena, dena.*  
Where shall we hold the dance-feast,  
my brother?

Who will give us the right  
advice, my brother?

It is Sri Shembu alone, my brother.  
To him let us go, my brother.

The five brothers, the forefathers,  
my brother,

They went to god Shembu, my  
brother.

Ram, Ram, oh Shembu!

Why and whence have you come?

Where shall we hold the dance-feast?

I cannot tell you, oh son,

But Vias Guru has a daughter,

She is Bai Phulala, my brother.

Put the question to her.

Let us go, brother, let us go, my  
brother!

Ram, Ram, sister.

Why and whence have you come, my  
brothers?

Where shall we hold the dance-feast,  
my sister?

There are my grandfathers, my  
brothers,

*Dena, dena, dedena, dena dada,*  
*bade dinam waiana nawi dada?*  
*Maṛ Bhawe dinam nawi dada,*  
*tan paṛa bade dinam dada?*

*Bur Bhawe dinam nawi dada.*  
*Tan paṛa bade dinam dada?*

*Sal meṭa Akaṛi dinam dada.*  
*Tamun Siwir tadur nawi dada,*

*Tetma maraṭ tendkat nawi dada.*

*Tad babona wakhutna nishan dada.*

*Nishan jhore manuta nawi dada.*

*Tetma tenda latere nawi dada.*  
*Kolik watang bakrana bhojun ata,*  
*Dari bhelita bhojun nawi dada.*

*Dena dena dena dedena dena.*  
*Tetma bagate maraṭ wokaṭ nawi dada?*

*Makun budhite bore wehana niwa*  
*dada?*

*Sri Shembhol unde mantor niwa dada.*  
*Wonaga maraṭ bhala dakaṭ niwa dada.*  
*Tamun siwir bhala tadur niwa dada.*

*Shemba naga sonda latere niwa dada.*

*Rame, Rame, Shembu te Shembu.*  
*Bekc bahan miraṭ watiṭ?*

*Tetma bagate momoṭ wokom?*

*Na nawe wehawan aio beta,*

*Vias Guruna adc miar,*

*Bai Phulala adc andi nawi dada.*

*Tanc pusite miraṭ kimṭ.*

*Deṭ dada te bhala deṭ ra nawi dada,*

*Rame bai te bhala Rame.*

*Bekc bhan miraṭ watiṭ nawi dada?*

*Tetma бага mamot wokom nawi bai?*

*Nawor tadur te bhala manter nawi*  
*koko.*

At Sinur Patera they live, my brothers  
 Ram, Ram sister, Ram, Ram"  
 The gods turned and went home,  
 There they dressed themselves up, oh  
 brothers  
 Like *champa* flowers appeared the  
 gods,  
 Like the yellow flowers of bottle  
 gourds,  
 Like *muga* flowers appeared the gods  
 Silken turbans they tied on their heads  
 And dressed in new blue garments  
 Let us go friend!  
 The sound of bottle drums rose  
 How did the gods set out?  
 The thunder of disk drums rolled  
 The sound of kettle-drums rose  
 Now we are going, sister!  
 Go without fear!  
 The gods set out on their journey,  
 Crossed the border of their own  
 village  
 And entered the land of their uncle's  
 village!

At this point the musicians broke off the song, which according to a long established tradition must be sung first at every visit of Dandari dancers, and after a moment's pause began a simple little *gumela* song with a sweet, melodious tune.

With the gods we journey round  
 By your grace we don dance-dress,  
 Stooping for you we dance,  
 Jingling jingling by the god's grace,  
 By your grace we don dance dress,  
 Stooping for you we dance,  
 Gods of the clans we worship,  
*It ai papa lala,*<sup>1</sup>  
 Earth goddess we worship,  
*It ai papa lala*  
 Great god we worship  
*It ai papa lala*  
 Bhigmana we worship,  
*It ai papa lala*

*Sinur Patera bhala andi te naur koko.*  
*Rame bai te bhala Rame nauri bai,*  
*Penoke masla te uara lata nauri dada;*  
*Penoke sauri te bhala mair nauri*  
*dada,*  
*Tiamfo pungah ina penoke nauri*  
*dada,*  
*Totoka jungal ina penoke nauri dada;*  
*Muga pungah ina penoke nauri dada*  
*Talane mandik unde uatang,*  
*Nelu jhagang bhala kerang nauri dada.*  
*Det garate bhala det nauri dada.*  
*Ekhandyal bhala turumna jhoki ata*  
*Bahan penoke sauri uatang?*  
*hanki dapnang satang atang,*  
*Ekhardyal bara turumna jhoki ata*  
*Dantam bai te bhala dantam nauri bai,*  
*Belasali te mirat sonj*  
*Penoke sonda te bara satang,*  
*Tanka siat suti kita,*

*Alur siat nanga lata penoke*

*Deu setun, daura setun,*  
*satinikun tsaura mai,*  
*mutsa nikun malpa*  
*sau golodam deu golodam,*  
*sau nikun tsaura mai,*  
*mutsa nikun malpa,*  
*saga deiaru mukdira*  
*uar papa lala,*  
*Dhumi deiaran mukdira,*  
*uar papa lala,*  
*Pedda deun mukdira,*  
*uar papa lala,*  
*Dhuma deun mukdira*  
*kar papa lala*

No translation or even the original text without music can give an idea of the extraordinary charm of these haunting tunes, their innumerable variations on a simple theme and the delightful transitions from one musical phrase to the other which retain an element of surprise

1 The subsequent verses of this song describe the reception of the Dandari Dancers at their uncle's house in Sinur Patera, which followed exactly the pattern observed by the Marlaras people in welcoming the guests from Bismetta.

2 A refrain which is said to have no meaning. This song, as several *gumela* songs, contains a good many Telugu words.

however often one may hear them. To convey by the written word the character of *gumela* songs is as impossible as it would be to describe a Bellini *aria* or the breath-taking fireworks of one of Rossini's finales by printing the few pointless lines of the underlying text. *Gumela* songs too must be heard to be enjoyed, for very many of the texts have little poetic merit; many consist of endless repetitions of a couple of phrases, in which each new verse brings only the change of one or two words. The song on the produce of a vegetable-garden (quoted on p. 362) is typical of many *gumela*, which enumerate at great length the gods worshipped, the crops on a man's field, or even more often the various ornaments worn by a beautiful girl. Slightly less stereotyped are those which picture in a few lines the meeting of a boy and a girl, sometimes romantic and sometimes ironic, but seldom betraying any great seriousness or depth of feeling.

The *gumela* which the Busimetta men chose for the next dance was of this class:

Boy:	Oh, wasp-waisted	<i>Tikurwisi narida</i>
	Who are you girl?	<i>badu baira?</i>
Girl:	A champa flower	<i>Tsempo pungara</i>
	Is Lachu Bai.	<i>Lachu baira,</i>
	Waist like a <i>gumela</i> , my boy;	<i>naŋi gumela, papa;</i>
	A champa flower	<i>tsempo pungara</i>
	Is Lachu Bai.	<i>Lachu baira.</i>
Boy:	Let us go to the bazaar, oh girl,	<i>Maraŋ haŋum dakaŋ bai,</i>
Girl:	To the bazaar I am ready to	<i>nana haŋum dakane,</i>
	go.	
Boy:	Let me go and buy you a <i>sari</i> .	<i>marat dikri tatkaŋ ki bai.</i>

With the change of song the dancers took up the *samdi kola*; like the *sar kola* it started with a circle formation in which the dancers stood alternately one 'girl,' one boy; with slow side-steps and a swinging of sticks from side to side they clicked—together, right neighbour, together, left neighbour—the circle travelling anti-clockwise. After sixty-two beats the 'girls' stepped in, forming an inner circle, each facing a boy. Then twice stepping forwards and backwards, clicking sticks with their partners, the 'girls' passed obliquely out and the boys obliquely in, turned and faced their new partners; then once more set backwards and forwards; the 'girls' and boys thus forming alternately outside and inside circles.

Spritely and gaily the Busimetta people danced the *samdi kola* in the flickering flamelight of many small fires, when suddenly from the darkness of the village street slithered three fantastic figures. With huge exaggerated steps, crouching as they walked with clubs over their shoulders, they crept up to the dancers and without a word of greeting or recognition they circled once, twice, three times round; sombre and sinister figures on the outskirts of the fire-lit crowd. Huge crowns of peacock-feathers lent them superhuman height, stiff goat-skin cloaks a supernatural air; bushy beards and moustaches concealed their features

Their eyes ringed with white paint glittered in the sunlight and their bodies naked but for narrow orange coloured *langots*, were painted

distant valley. They were the *gusari* of Busimetta, and their strange attire perpetuated the tradition of the Raur folk who obtained the first fiery head dresses from Birnandi Guru. Dandari Raur is often referred to as the *guru* or patron of the *gusari*, and no Dandari expedition would be complete without the additional fun and excitement caused by these masked dancers who have licence for all manner of horseplay and unbridled foolery.

On a sudden cry the *gusari* abandoned stealth they threw up their arms jerked themselves upright so that the strings of small bells at their wrists and elbows and ankles and the great bells strung on holsters round their shoulders and waist, till now so carefully muffled, clattered ceaselessly. The dancers scattered before them as they rushed into the centre of the dance place shouting wildly and jumping up and down while the crowd roared with laughter. The music stopped and the *gusari* went about among the crowd, busterously threatening young boys with their clubs, poking old men in the ribs, grimacing at children who turned away half frightened, snatching lighted pipes from the smokers' mouths and all the while cracking ribald jokes that provoked roars of laughter.

After a little they allowed, rather reluctantly, the ushers to lead them to have their feet washed and this simple ceremony occasioned more buffoonery. Then they were given places of honour in the veranda of Kodu's house, tobacco and leaf pipes were served to them, then followed the ceremonial greeting with many a 'Ram Ram' and enquiries after each others' health. Children, parents and kinsmen, the *gusari* turning the phrases so comically that nearly every word from their lips was greeted with laughter.

Now that the *gusari* puffed at their leaf pipes the musicians took up their drums again and the melodious tune of another *gumela* called to the dancers. It was a song of a girl who went to bathe in a tank and left her ornaments and clothes on the bank, various men passed by and each picked up one or other of her belongings meeting the girl's protests with a family veiled invitation to marriage, the picture of a tree bird sitting on a tree introduces every stanza its chirping being likened to the pleading of the helpless girl in the water.

On the dried up tree sat the tree bird  
Chirping it started to chatter  
By the tamarind trees near the tank  
To bathe and wash I have come  
Then came the fatal son

*Wata mara si : ula*  
*tri narunlata yo*  
*ch namani tara tene*  
*ka al kuti lafon*  
*Hanko uator Pciur : ari*



FIG. 69. A *gusari* with peacock feather head-dress and false whiskers.



a pound ng lime

a pa nt ng each oter th lme and oot





FIG. 72. *Gusari* in full dress.



11 *Gusari* leading a troupe of Dandari dancers

11 4 The *Gusari* s dance in the village square





My ear-ring he took away.  
 Brother give me my ear-ring,  
 Else my mother will scold."  
 "Never mind your mother,  
 I'll make her my mother-in-law."

On the dried up tree sat the *tiri*-bird,  
 Chirping it started to chatter,  
 "By the tamarind trees near the tank  
 To bathe and to wash I have come.  
 Then came my sister's husband,  
 My belt he took away.  
 Brother give me my belt,  
 Else my father will scold."  
 "Never mind your father,  
 I'll make him my father-in-law."

On the dried up tree sat the *tiri*-bird  
 Chirping it started to chatter;  
 "By the tamarind trees near the tank,  
 To bathe and to wash I have come.  
 Then came my uncle's son.  
 My anklet he took away.  
 Brother give me my anklet,  
 Else my elder brother will scold."  
 "Never mind your brother,  
 I'll make him my brother-in-law."

On the dried up tree sat the *tiri*-bird  
 Chirping it started to chatter:  
 "By the tamarind trees near the tank.  
 To bathe and to wash I have come.  
 Then came my aunt's son,  
 My necklet he took away.  
 Brother give me my necklet,  
 Else my brother's wife will scold."  
 "Never mind your brother's wife.  
 I'll make her my sister-in-law."

While the dancers tripped and swung through the manifold figures of the stick dance, the *gusari* paced round on the outskirts with their clubs on their shoulders and their slow elastic steps firmly controlled by the rhythm of the drums. Women were still scarce among the spectators, but the boys who had gone to the forest with torches to bring leaves had returned and were now busy making plates for the meal. After their long walk the Busimetta men were looking forward to their supper, and just to remind their hosts tactfully of the meal they expected, sang the *gumela* that tells of the woman who collects provisions for feeding the Dandari dancers:

Our grand-fathers' drums, the gods  
 have come!  
 The girl picks up her new basket.  
 The path to the garden she takes;  
 "Oh gardener, brother!" She call,

*na tari wotorn.*  
*Na tari sim dada,*  
*na yayal range re.*  
*Nik yayal ateké*  
*nak ati poray.*

*Wata mara firi-uta,*  
*firi wayusi lata yo.*  
*chintamani taraitena*  
*kaial kuti laton.*  
*Hanke wator bainur marso*  
*na pati wotorn.*  
*Na pati sim dada,*  
*ma babal rangamur.*  
*Nik babal ateké,*  
*nak mamal mural.*

*Wata mara firi uta,*  
*firi wayusi lata yo;*  
*chintamani taraitena,*  
*kaial kuti laton.*  
*Hanko wator mamaror mari,*  
*na panjol wotorn.*  
*Na panjol sim dada,*  
*ma dadal rangamur.*  
*Nik dadal ateké,*  
*nak tada mural.*

*Wata mara firi uta,*  
*firi wayusi lata yo;*  
*chintamani taraitena,*  
*kaial kuti laton.*  
*Hanko wator atinor mari,*  
*na sari wotor.*  
*na sari sim dada,*  
*ma ange rangare,*  
*Nik ange ateké*  
*nak sagle bai.*

*Maali ladura alara lata dotal*

*singare dangi firi lata,*  
*wayusi wayusi lata lata*  
*ma dotal dotal indara lata*

'Our grand fathers' drums, the gods  
have come,  
Eighteen vegetables give me, oh  
brother"  
To the onion bed the gardener goes,  
A bundle of onions he grasps,  
Of eighteen garden fruits he gives,  
Full to the brim is the new basket  
The path to the house the girl takes,  
Quickly the girl does the cooking,  
"Dinner is ready, oh elders,  
Come and sit down to the meal"  
The food they are eating, the elders,  
And after the meal they rise,  
Leaves and tobacco are offered,  
Hosts greet their guests,  
Guests greet their hosts  
And dancers and drums bid farewell

*ma celi tadura abara nata dera,  
athara nari a bhajjala sim dada*

*Uhta lopale danure maralo,  
uhta junja jana majal,  
athara uarina bhajjala unure,  
Singare daure nihare baira  
Rotaze sarize unare baira,  
randhaye urhize hare baira,  
sarpal tajari ala tadura,  
jangat udene narate tadura"  
Jeriye hare later tadur,  
jeriye harize redane tadur,  
akize tamul'na mane kiana,  
tanuaye maneyo urke siana,  
uraye maneyo lana jetana,  
akara sareyo hare baira*

By the time this song with its many repetitions had been sung, the food and leaf-pipes had been laid aside on the floor, and the guests arranged themselves on the floor, the hosts brought of dal-curry heaps on the plates now set before each guest, but the curry was ladied out with long-handled deep-bowled spoons. Soon the Dandari dancers were immersed in the silent task of eating. In the lull that followed the meal new leaf-pipes were lit and the drone of gossip grew as the guests reclined besides the fires and thus gave the hosts time for their own dinner in their houses. But the evening had only begun, and the Busimetta men set about preparing for the song, dramatic and usually highly humorous performances, in which the Gond's love of fun and risky jokes finds ample scope. Some of these songs are almost entirely improvised and are little more than horseplay, either without any music or with a few songs thrown in, that only vaguely fit the context. But others are songs with songs that carry

men and while the dancers resumed the stick dance, the actors retired to a dark courtyard to dress up: one young man put on a bright coloured *sari* and many rich ornaments and another dressed as an old woman with strands of grey hemp hung wig-like over his head.

The drums called the women, the Kodu's voice and their

From the band rose a tremolo of drums, then a rhythm swung out, different from that of the *gumela*, supported by the large *dapna*-drums, beaten, not with sticks, but with the palm of the hand.

An old woman and a girl, her young daughter, appeared on the stage; the girl opened the act with a verse:

GIRL (singing):

Mother I am still a little girl,  
If your son-in-law comes,  
Don't send me with him.  
Mother I am still a little girl.  
Dharmapuri is a good village,  
Daily wages will I bring;  
Mother I am still a little girl  
If your son-in-law comes,  
Don't send me with him.

*Baye nana chuḍur manton,  
sare wateke  
rohuma wo;  
baye nana chuḍur manton.  
Dharmapuri tsokoḥ mateke,  
rozi ruḍiya tatka;  
baye nana chuḍur manton  
sare wateke rohuma wo.*

Then the son-in-law with blanket over shoulder and stick in hand entered and said in a speaking voice:

Mother-in-law, mother-in-law, send  
your daughter to my house.

*Ati, ati, ni pedgi roha.*

GIRL (singing):

Mother, I won't, I won't go,  
Oh mother mine, oh mother mine,  
Your son-in-law's mind, mother,  
Goes round the liquor still.  
I won't, I won't go.  
Oh mother mine, oh mother mine,  
The buffalo you gave me mother,  
He took to the liquor-still.  
I won't, I won't go,  
Oh mother mine, oh mother mine,  
Not even water he asks of me,  
mother,

*Baye nana sonon sonon,  
baye wo, baye wo.  
ni sarena budi, baye,  
bhati welimaru.  
nana sonon sonon,  
Baye wo, baye wo,  
nime sita yermi baye,  
bhati ron wolor.  
Nana sonon sonon,  
baye wo, baye wo,  
yer injera talkor, baye,*

Never does he step on my sleeping-  
mat, mother,

*pirp injere jaror, baye;*

I won't, I won't go,

*nana sonon, sonon,  
baye wo, baye wo.*

Oh mother mine, oh mother mine.

MOTHER (in speaking voice):

Daughter darling, don't spoil the good  
name of your parents.

*Tani buchi, auwal babona  
izat titab kima.*

GIRL (singing):

Darling you say, mother,  
Daughter you say, mother,  
Yet, this time I won't go.

*Buchi inti, baye,  
tani inti baye,  
ideratk nana sonon baye wo.*

MOTHER (in speaking voice)

Son-in-law, she says she won't go this  
time; go away once more, and  
when you come again, then I will  
send her.

*Te sare bawa, ideratk wayo  
inta; malsi so, marla  
wateke' rohka.*

The son-in-law with a few vain protests left the scene; he had hardly gone when a handsome young man (Papidosi) dressed up in

the best coat Busimetta could muster, and a red silk turban appeared from the opposite side and sat down on a cot, without paying any attention to the two women.

GIRL (singing)

How handsome he is, oh mother,  
How handsome he is oh mother,  
Of what land  
May he be raja?  
What may he his name,  
Oh my mother?  
What may be his village,  
Oh my mother?

*Ital bata sabator uere baye ua,  
Ital bata sabator uere baye wo,  
bade muluknor uore,  
uere rajal uo?  
Bata porol uena mandar,  
uere baye ua?  
Bade nagur mandar  
uena baye uo?*

Young man (Papidosi) turning to the girl, asked her in a speaking voice

What business is it of yours, what my  
country may be what my village  
may be what my name may be  
Why do you want me to tell you all  
this?

*Aia batal kam manta,  
bad muluk mateke, batal ai,  
bata paral mateke nik batal  
ai, nik batal zarurat?*

GIRL (singing, in a different and very melodious tune)

You I'll marry, friend  
Your wife I will become.  
What is your village?  
What is your name?

*Aiku tunla dadara  
naku saiba amura  
Aia bade nagura?  
Aia bata porale?*

YOUNG MAN (PAPIDOSI), (singing in same tune)

My home I will tell,  
Lenjekunta it is dear,  
My name I will tell,  
I am Papidosi Rajana  
(continuing in speaking voice)  
If such is your wish,  
Then pledge me your troth

*Naua manmar iteke,  
Lenjekunta ropi ha,  
na porole iteke  
Papidosi Rajana*

*Achar nua dil manta  
te uachan sim, bhaka sim*

GIRL (giving PAPIDOSI her hand and singing)

Take my promise, dear,  
Me you shall marry  
Take my promise, dear,  
Me you shall marry,

*Teti bhaka yeti ba,  
nake nime tungaye,  
Teti bhaka yeti ba  
nake nime tungaye*

PAPIDOSI (putting his hand in hers and singing)

Take my promise,  
You I will marry  
Take my promise,  
You I will marry

*Taru bhaka nui ha  
niku nana tunlaye,  
laru bhaka nui ha,  
niku nana tunlaye*

GIRL (in speaking voice)

I am going to my mother's house,  
You wait here for a while,  
I'll come quickly back.

*Nan danton baina ron,  
nime gatke man uchi man,  
nana jaldi uanton*

PAPIDOSI (in speaking voice)

All right

*So, so*

GIRL (speaking to MOTHER who re-entered the stage) :

Mother, mother, I am going with  
Papidosi Rajana.

*Baye, baye, nana sodianton  
Papidosi Rajanaga.*

MOTHER (speaking) :

Dearest child, when the old son-in-  
law comes, what I shall tell him.

*Buchi tani, saye barial  
wateke, nana batal wehka.*

GIRL (speaking) :

Show him the path I have gone.

*Nana sonwal sari weha.*

The girl left the stage with Papidosi, and shortly afterwards  
the son-in-law returned; he said to the mother :

Mother-in-law, where has your  
daughter gone? I don't see her.

*Ati, ati, ni pedgi beke sota?  
diso.*

MOTHER (in speaking voice) :

I have born her body  
Her mind I have not framed.  
I'll show you the path  
She has taken.

*Nana chefatun meitan,  
mati buditun meitsilon.  
Sonwal sari nik  
wehanton.*

SON-IN-LAW (singing) :

Show me mother-in-law dear,  
Where, oh where she has gone.

*Bendo weha ati wo,  
Adu бага sota wo.*

MOTHER (singing) :

Listen, Listen, son-in-law,  
This is the way she has gone.  
(in speaking voice) :

*Kenja, kenja bawa ra,  
ado sonwal sari rai sota.*

Oh, son-in-law some stranger came,  
and with him she went off.

*Te saŕe-bawa, bore musapar  
wator, won toŕo soŕita.*

SON-IN-LAW (in speaking voice) :

Of what village, of what town, what  
is his name, do tell me.

*Bad nar, bad nagur,  
bata porol nak weha.*

MOTHER (in speaking voice) :

Son-in-law, his village is Lenjekunta-  
nagur, and his name is  
Papidosi Rajana.

*Tesare bawa, wona nar  
iteke Lenjekuntanagur  
wona porol iteke Papidosi Rajal.*

SON-IN-LAW (singing) :

Him I will beat, mother-in-law,  
Her I'll bring back, mother-in-law.

*W'ona paka ati wo,  
tane woka ati wo,*

Excitedly he walked up and down as if on his way to Lenjekun-  
tanagur; at last he spied Papidosi and the girl and pounced on them  
shouting :

Who are you? Whose wife have you  
taken? Did you get her so cheap  
you bastard?

*Nime bonira? Bona baiko  
wotira, saston ata, barwisha?*

PAPIDOSI (in speaking voice) :

Hé grandfather! I took her not  
by force or threats;  
of her own free will she came,

*Te tado! nana zulm zabardasti  
nana wota silon;  
tane raŕite wata.*

SON IN LAW (inging)

I'll beat you rascal!  
And I'll take her back

*Nikun paka lekara,  
tane uola lekara*

PAPIDOSI (seizing a stick and singing)

You can't carry her off,  
Look out! See how you will fare!

*Vi taro ayora,  
paja mune, suratai!*

SON IN LAW (catching PAPIDOSI'S arm and singing)

Take your sword  
And cut off my head  
(if you can)!

*Alet kachi puzara  
Hi aine tala puzara!*

The two men struggled, but at last Papidosi freed his arm and struck at his rival, who fell to the ground, Papidosi and the girl, ran off the scene.

The laughter of the spectators at the defeat of the husband had hardly died down, when the dancers once more took the scene. But this time the boys dressed up as girls sat out, and only young men formed the circle, the youth of Marlavai dancing with the Busimetta people. The *gumela* drums too were silent and the sharp rapid clicking of the *turbuli* and the deep tone of a *para* gave a quicker and more vivacious rhythm. No songs accompanied the drumming while the dancers danced the *hure kola* or *munah* dance, weaving figure of eight patterns, each change of figure being signalled by shouts of *isaisoi, isaisoi*, sometimes preceded by a long drawn out roar. This type of dance, which is more lively and executed with greater verve than the dances to the melodious *gumela* tunes, is called *para* after the drum used in accompaniment.

The *gusari* were once again patrolling the outskirts of the dancers. But not for long were they content with this subsidiary role. Breaking into the circle with raised clubs they dispersed the dancers with shouts and yells, occupying the scene for themselves. Now the rhythm of the drums changed, not *para* and *turbuli* but *dapna* and kettle drums rolled, as both Busimetta and Marlavai drummers took up their position under the shelter to accompany the dance of the *gusari*. In the broad street beside the *mandop* whose cross beams interfered with their high head-dresses the three *gusari* lined up, three abreast they marched slowly and in perfect time, putting down first heel and then toe and carrying their clubs in front of them. At the end of the street a second time a second time they were singing their clubs.

from them, lifting their clubs they shouted "We are the horses of the Raja!" and putting their clubs between their legs, galloped about, their arms bent like lions rampant. "We are the horses of the Gonds!" they yelled, and almost losing their grip on the clubs between their legs sidled and slipped about the path imitating the hopeless movements of a bad rider on a frisky animal. Then the three formed a circle and

FIG. 75. *Gusari* in a mood of buffoonery.



FIG. 76. A Dandari dancer with wooden mask.





A pantomime enacted at Da idan time

5      1 players accompanying the Dandan dancing





stamped out the rhythm with a flat footed ponderous gait, every now and then whirling suddenly on their own axis so that the goat-skin cloaks flew wide. Thus they postured and posed, bending their knees and shaking their bodies: with their goat-skins flapping, they alternated between solemn and grotesque gestures, both equally amusing to the audience, and at the end they rushed from the scene and disappeared into several houses, trying to frighten women and children and pilfering food.

In the meantime another *song* had been arranged and when the excitement over the *gusari's* antics had subsided and the *para* and *turbuli* had resumed, a boy dressed as girl, carrying a basket on her head, entered; almost immediately she was accosted by a young man, who staff in hand swaggered on to the scene from the opposite direction.

MAN (singing):

Girl, walking along the road  
Tell me what is your clan?

*Nime sari sonuwani  
bata pari Rami bai?*

GIRL (singing):

Who are you man to ask my clan?  
I'll trample you under my feet  
You who hire out your wife!

*Nime pari pusikiwani!  
boni andi, baiko barya;  
nik latate kundi kika,  
randurya baiko barya,*

MAN (singing):

Kick you may, I'll take your feet in  
my arms;  
Together let's go to the liquor still,  
Liquor from pots we will drink,  
Sitting together like husband and  
wife.

*Niwang latang wofite yetka;*

*nime nana bhati ron daka,  
bunga men kel undkat,  
jora jori marat udkat.*

GIRL (singing in scornful tone):

Yours shall be winnowing fan and  
basket,

*Seti topli niwa,*

Your younger brother shall be mine<sup>1</sup>

*serendu marso nauwor.*

Undeterred by her refusal and the taunt that she would rather have his brother, the young man tried to drag the girl away; but she swore so lustily, calling him bastard and son of a bitch, and handled him so roughly that he slunk off the scene amidst the audience's derisive cries.

The whole atmosphere had grown more and more boisterous, and the time was now ripe for pantomimes where singing and music give way to impromptu skits full of meaty jokes and ribaldry. Money-lenders, Brahmins, government officials and even the gods came in for ridicule. Scene followed upon scene, and often the actors themselves did not seem to know how exactly each sketch would end.

There was the pot-bellied Police Amin or Sub-Inspector in khaki trousers and a fez, arriving with a string of coolies and an absurdly

1. The meaning is: you shall do the house-work and I will amuse myself with your younger brother; flirtations of a young wife with her husband's younger brother are very frequent and are accepted by Gond opinion.

funny horse constructed of blankets and cloths on a frame activated by two boys. He had hardly arrived in the village when he shouted in Urdu for patel and havildar and ordered enormous quantities of supplies for his dinner—twenty five fowls, ten seers of rice, twenty cakes of wheat

stem was not to be had and for each unfavourable answer the Amin belaboured the man with a stick until in desperation he went away and came back with the minimum of provisions. Meanwhile two 'uniformed' *jauans* or constables were searching amongst the crowd and presently they pounced on a youth and arrested him for abducting another man's wife. They dragged him before the Amin who after a summary questioning to which the prisoner did not reply, ordered punishment to be meted out. But whatever punishment he pronounced was immediately inflicted on himself, thirty strokes on the back and the 'constables' took a stick and laid it across the Amin's back thirty times,—stones on the shoulder, the pulling of ears and screwing of thumbs—all these were administered to the Amin himself, until at last he was thrown backwards off the cot and dragged out by the legs to the excited shrieks of the delighted audience.

After a short interval of dancing and more *gumela* and singing another short skit was staged. A man and his 'wife' were on their way to the shrine of the great Bhimara; they wanted to consult the god as to why they had no offspring. They asked numerous spectators the way to the shrine—all were most helpful with directions for the way and eventually having circled the stage fruitlessly several times they came upon a *gusari* who had seated himself cross-legged in their path; he held his club upright and represented the god and indeed his huge feather-crown closely resembled the bunches of peacock plumes in the shrines of the god Bhimara. The couple approached the god with many bows and obeisances making much of the different observances of the customary ritual; the man held 'incense,' smouldering cow dung so near to the nose of the *gusari* that it almost got burnt, drew patterns in red and yellow on the ground and he and his wife prostrated themselves before the deity. But to all their prayers and supplications the god remained silent—there was no seer to serve as mouthpiece for the deity, the couple repeated their bows and obeisances again and again while the crowd shouted ribald suggestions as to the cause of their trouble. At last a man naked but for a scrappy *langoti* rushed on the scene and with rapid dance steps and outstretched arms circled round the group like some bird of prey. Bareheaded and smeared with ashes from head to foot, he looked more like a Kolam than a Gond. Running this way and that, he danced nearer and nearer the god and finally flung himself on the ground with all outward signs of possession. With ridi

coulously exaggerated jerks and grimaces he enacted all the stages of the trance of a real *bhaktal*, and at last began prophesying in the usual abrupt way. The nature of the couple's quest gave ample scope for ambiguous and obscene jokes, and the spectators, far from being shocked by the irreverent parody on so serious a matter as the 'divine voice,' rocked with laughter. The little sketch ended rather inconclusively with a dance of the couple, the seer and the *gusari* in which they sang a Marathi song with no direct bearing on the scene.

Marathi songs are nowadays quite usual features in such skits, but they are sung in a style very different from ordinary Gond singing. When Gonds sing their own songs they let the voice stream out in the natural effortless way, seldom raising its pitch to more than *mezza voce*. In singing Marathi songs, on the other hand, they imitate the nasal manner of Marathwara and press the voice to the artificial pitch characteristic of most Indian singing. A feature of nearly all the sketches with Marathi songs is a boy dressed up as a girl wearing a gaudy head-dress of cheap glass-beads, who dances in the manner of Hindu street dancers with rapid short steps and eloquent snaky gestures of hands and arms. These solo dances, so foreign to the traditional Gond style, are to-day considered amusing by the tribesmen, and there is rarely a performance of *song* when such 'dancing girls' do not figure in one or the other sketch; generally their appearance is unconnected with the plot and they remain more or less impassive till the other actors intone a Marathi tune.

But Marathi songs are understandable only to a few, and when the burlesques were over, the Busimetta men took up their *gumela* drums, and danced once more the stick dance: the sambar dance, the wagtail dance, and the dance of the maize, accompanied by some of the haunting songs that are the most delightful part of all Gond music:

I'll go to the market at Deogarh,  
mother,  
I'll husk bearded rice oh mother,  
I'll husk long-grained rice oh mother,  
I'll husk bird's rice oh mother;  
All this I'll load on a cart, oh mother  
I'll yoke the bulls to a trotting cart, oh  
mother  
I'll dress in a sari worth an elephant,  
oh mother,  
I'll put on a bodice worth a calf, oh  
mother.  
Like a squirrel's tail the mark on my  
forehead, oh mother  
Like a bandicoot's tail the paint on  
my eyes, oh mother

*Deogarhta haṭ souena, nana bayena*  
*Kata wanjina bagri usena, nana bayena*  
*lavanga wanjina bagri usena, nana bayena*  
*koṭka piṭe wanjina usena, nana bayena*  
*bagrita bharti tungana, nana beyena;*  
*dhurpurkina gaṭ puhena, nana beyena.*  
*Teni mola dikari henau, nana bayena.*  
*kura mola kunchuri kerena, nana bayena*  
*Wartse tokor kuku kerena, nana bayena*  
*Supe tokor surma kerena, nana bayena,*

I'll go to the market at Deogarh oh  
 mother  
 And sell all my rice oh mother  
 Wh ch lane shall I enter oh mother?  
 The weaver's lane will I enter mother  
 To suit my figure I'll buy a sarī oh  
 mother  
 The goldsmith's lane I will enter oh  
 mother  
 For my nose I will buy a stud oh  
 mother  
 For my neck I will buy a necklace oh  
 mother  
 To the metal workers street I'll go oh  
 mother  
 For my feet I'll buy toe rings oh  
 mother

*Deogarha haiam sonena, nana  
 bayena  
 bagrita wikara tunkena nana bayena  
 Bade sat nengana nana bayena?  
 Salena sat nengana nana bayena  
 mendol sursi ditri yetena nana  
 bayena  
 Sonata sat nengana nana bayena  
 motor sursi mukera yetena nana  
 bayena  
 ghoti sursi dhitasi yetena nana  
 bayena  
 Hasara sat sonena nana bayena  
 kal sursi jorari yetena nana bayena*

And so the song went on describing all that the girl bought at the bazaar at Deogarh, the famous home of the Maravi clan. Other songs followed, but gradually sleepiness overcame dancers and singers, the music died down, and the guests wraps themselves in blankets and lay down beside the fires or found cots on verandas or in the houses of friends.

Next morning no one rose early, and the sun was well in the sky when the *gusari* began to renew their battered make up. This was a lengthy procedure, watched with amusement by many of the Marlavai children. First the *gusari* took from bags slung over their shoulders large lumps of white chalk and spreading their goat skin cloaks flat on the ground pounded the chalk to a powder with their clubs, this they mixed into a paste with water, a small boy brought them an unwashed cooking pot and scraping off the soot, they mixed it into a smooth black paste. Then they stripped themselves of necklaces and bells and with these two pastes began to paint their bodies in various patterns. Dipping two fingers in the black paste, one man drew first three broad bands on his forelegs three on his thighs three on each forearm and three on each upper arm. Then he filled in the

*usari* drew  
 ines. The

Another *gusari* imprinted with his three middle fingers white dots all over his body and had his back similarly treated, while the third painted his whole body with white and on this background his companions drew finger wide black lines.

Only when the paint was dry did the *gusari* tie on their anklets, wristlets and elbow bands of pellet bells, their necklaces of shells and jungle fruits, and fasten their leather belts and hoisters, both strung with

large pear-shaped pellet bells.<sup>1</sup> Last of all they stuck on their bushy moustaches and beards of goats' hair and fibre and attended to their head-dresses. They tied an old piece of cloth firmly round the head, and on this set the high feather-crowns. The base of these crowns was made of two strong rings of bamboo which carried a cone of plaited bamboo, completely hidden by row upon row of waving plumes of peacock feathers; each crown carried in front a pair of small horns, antelope or goat, wrapped round with green and silver paper, and one man had fixed a small mirror between the horns. A row of coiled peacock-quills decorated the rim of the head-dress and at the back hung streamers of snail shells, dried jungle fruits, peacock-quills and tassels of fibre.

Their toilet completed, the *gusari* slung their shaved goat-skin cloaks over their shoulders, and club in hand set out in search of food. All three together they rushed into Kodu's house shouting for food. They invaded Lachu Patel's kitchen, they climbed into Kanaka Badu's attic, they begged and robbed from the villagers until the cloths which they carried under their goat-skin cloaks bulged with provisions. But besides all this they were entertained by various prominent people; Atram Lachu made them tea in the courtyard of his storehouse and out of brass bowls they drank, sipping and gulping ostentatiously. Kanaka Moti's wife brought out wheaten bread and a bowl of *dal* curry, and the *gusari* fell to dipping pieces of bread into the common bowl, and eating greedily. Then in the morning sun they spread out their booty under the dance shelter, eating a little of this and a little of that: bit into raw onions, munched them voraciously, wrenched with their teeth the grain from early ripened millet ears, tore the orange maize from the cob, devouring it raw, all this being considered in keeping with their character of 'wild men of the woods.'

Later the Dandari dancers gathered again in front of Kodu's house, the sunlight sparkling on their ornaments. Those dressed as girls in skirts and bodice wore two or three silver necklets, heart-shaped silver-pendants, two or three silver bracelets, silver belts and two kinds of anklets, while the young men with practically the same type of jewels wore long tailed turbans and over them long knotted scarves, shirts or coats, a few priding themselves on long white tunics of Persian cut never used on any other occasion.

The sound of the *gumela* called and the first dance of the day was, as always, the *kaisar kola* or broom dance, suggestive of the sweeping of housefloors and courtyards in the early morning. Standing in a circle, each facing a partner, the dancers clicked their sticks for sixteen beats, —click together, click partners, click together,—then each began

1. The method of attaching these large bells to the leather straps is peculiar: the eyelets of the bells are passed through holes in the broad leather strap and threaded together by a narrow leather thong Cf. Fig. XVIII on p. 331.

travelling the way he faced, the right hand partner clockwise, and the left hand partner anti-clockwise; with one oblique step out and a sweeping of the ground with both sticks the dancers passed on; to this the singers sang the appropriate *gumela*:

In a garden at Sitagondi  
Grows the *jetta* flower,  
Sweeping, sweeping, my hips ache  
At the sight of girls and boys  
The flowers open in blossom,  
At the sight of the old men and  
women,  
The flowers shrivel and die,  
At the sight of tiny children,  
Buds burst forth anew

*Sitagondi uante,  
jetta mali pungar;  
sineke sineke na nari nonta,  
Ria piur suyneke,  
jagendar pungar;  
matra matra surneke,*

*mur jural pungar  
pekur uckur surneke,  
karia dohar pungar.*

For a while *gumela* alternated with *para* dances and there were more burlesques with songs and dancing in Marathi style. But after an hour or so, the dancing stopped, and the Marlavai men prepared for the rite in honour of the visiting Akara gods. A mat was spread in the shelter before the *detari's* house, and on this were arranged all the drums, including the large *dapna* and kettle-drums, the dance-sticks, bell anklets, and *gusari* hats. Then a small goat and a chicken were brought, in front of the drums Lachu Patel drew the usual pattern of turmeric and vermillion, and all present, hosts as well as guests, formed a semi circle and invoked the Dandari gods in silent prayer



FIG XXIX Iron kettle drum with hide membrane.

The animals were beheaded and the heads placed before the drums. The offerings of roast liver and cooked grain concluded this rite, and then the goat was quickly cut up, and curry cooked for the farewell meal. But the legs of the goat were given to the *gusari* as their traditional share.

After the meal the Dandari dancers were given presents by the two owners of Akara drums in Marlavai, three rupees by Kanaka Kodu and one rupee by Soyam Maru, and then they took leave of their hosts with all due ceremony, embracing them one by one. At last they reformed their procession on the outskirts of the village. But there they were held up by the women of Marlavai, who addressed them singing with the traditional questions.

To which land are you going,  
brothers?

*Bade desun sonji dada?*

To which land are you going,  
brothers?

*Bade desun sonji dada?*

And the Dandari dancers answered in the same tune:

To the land of gold we are going,  
Gold in plenty we'll bring.

*Soneta desun sonji, soneta  
bharti tatom.*

Then the antiphonal dialogue continued:

WOMEN:

To which land are you going,  
brothers?

*Bade desun sonji dada?*

DANDARI DANCERS:

To the land of diamonds, we go:  
Diamonds in plenty we'll bring.

*Hirana desun sonji;  
Hirana bharti tatom.*

WOMEN:

Bring them then but the tiger's gate  
we have closed, the tiger's door we  
have closed.

*Tatiṭ mati wag murial wesi waṭtom,  
wag wesi jopo waṭtom.*

Give us our toll, oh brothers.

*Mawa bhundo sim, dada.*

DANDARI DANCERS:

What must be given, we'll give, oh  
girls.

*Siwal bhundo sikom, bai.*

WOMEN:

Rafters and bindings, how many are  
there, brothers?

*Wesitang bandang batsese, dada.*

Their number you shall tell us.

*Tana hisab weha.*

DANDARI DANCERS

If we cannot tell, we'll give you  
diamonds in plenty.

*Weheweke dakomte hirana bharta  
sikom,*

If we cannot tell we'll give you gold  
in plenty.

*Weheweke dakomte soneta bharti  
sikom.*

If we cannot tell we'll give you the boy  
of the Akara drums.

*Weheweke dakomte akara ta pedal  
sikom.*

## WOMEN

Rafters and bindings how many are there, brothers?

Now tell us brothers

## DANDARI DANCERS

If we have to tell we'll tell

Rafters and bindings there are but two<sup>1</sup>

## WOMEN

In the bazaar crowd how many are there brothers?

## DANDARI DANCERS

If we have to tell we'll tell oh girls

But if we tell what will you give us?

## WOMEN

A girl we will give you in marriage

## DANDARI DANCERS

If we have to tell we'll tell oh girls

In the bazaar crowd are but two one woman and one man<sup>2</sup>

## WOMEN

In the field how many millet stalks brothers?

How many are there tell us brothers

## DANDARI DANCERS

That too we'll tell you

There are but two millet stalks

One is straight and one is crooked<sup>3</sup>

*Wes tang bandang batsele dada*

*W ehaye, dada*

*W ehe cal mateke uel koi, bai*

*Wes tang bandang rand<sup>1</sup>*

*Matumia eia di batsele dada urune,  
mirat uehaj*

*W ehe cal mateke uehkom bai,  
W ephantom mais mak batal sikit?*

*W ehteke pedgi sikom*

*W ehe cal mateke uehkon bai*

*Matumia eia di eise, bai*

*Undi weilo uaror mara*

*W autang jona kutang batsele, dada*

*W ehayo dada*

*Tan unde uehkom*

*W autang kutang randeho bai*

*Undi sorkal, undi uakeral*

Thus ended the play of chartered question and answer and the Dandari dancers paid the women their toll of copper coins. But, however many of the traditional riddles may be asked, the appropriate answer is always there are but two, one male and one female.

The toll paid, the Dandari dancers departed to the beating of *dapna* and kettle drums and the shrieking blasts from the Pardhan's large horn

fainter  
crowns

1 *Wes tang* are the bamboo rafters supporting the thatch of a house, *bandang* are the ligatures by which they are held in place: there are of course many rafters and ligatures in a roof more than can easily be counted: the answer that there are two only refers to the fact that there are two types: one considered as male and the other as female; thus among the rafters there are men and women.

2 Here as in the previous question the answer is "two, one man and one woman": the idea being that however large and diverse a bazaar crowd may be it can be reduced to men and women; the two fundamental elements in mankind.

3 The idea is the same as above: among all the stalks in the millet fields there are only two main shapes: the straight stalks considered as male and the stalks bent under the weight of grain considered female.





FIG. 79. Manavai.

FIG. 80. A phase in the *gumela* dance.



What is the quarrel you have in your house?

At the well the wayfarer waits for you,  
Tell oh tell the truth oh girl

GIRL

What shall I say of the quarrel friend

My mother is late and I always quarrel

MAN

If it is so why say there dear  
Come with me and live in my country

GIRL

Which is your village, my friend?  
What is your name my friend?

MAN

My village is Bombay town  
And merchant Lalia is my name  
Great merchant am I called,  
In my country I have a large estate,  
In my house oh girl there is no want  
In my courtyard treasures are  
buried

In your house what wealth is there?  
On your limbs there are no jewels!

GIRL

Stranger how clever you are!  
How you have  
Sized up my jewels rascal!

MAN

From Bombay town I came  
wandering  
To trade in pearls and corals.  
Whosoever wants pearls,  
Come quickly I'll give them cheap!

GIRL

The buyer of pearls is not at home,  
To another land he has gone.

MAN

Be sure for a little while, and  
Your hair I'll adorn with pearls.

GIRL

Your sister may marry a butcher,  
Then dress her up in pearls  
I will tell my husband,  
And he will beat you well.

*mana ton jagra ba ata mania?*

*I ubi taga marlan masapar andon,*

*khatal g ba rime laka bayawa*

*Entel lalla d ba rata jagata*

*J tar sanduk jagra mania*

*Li ni na : mania hari  
nana ton dang nana desare*

*Ya ra rre bade dadara?  
Ya ra p tol ba li dadara?*

*Nana ratu bai Bombay shekatu,  
nana joral bas, Lalia saularu  
Nana joral mania bara saularu  
jagra mania mulkhasat  
Nana ton bai kami ba ai,  
ratate fuka rime mar'ang,*

*nana ton bai batar sile  
Ya ra mendode nana duo!*

*Nime masapar dagur guraxar,  
asurata parilika nime  
turgenta lelana*

*Bombay shekeratel kantona johorua*

*rotu parilika tungutan bepar  
Donke nana laga mateke  
jaldi nana sato nana nika*

*Man jetaul dada ton silor,  
parai man'ukre sodin sotor,*

*Gatha mer ral sang am  
bhango bhang rik mo ing nikula*

*Kothina ton nana selar mandar,  
ta raga mo ing nime nihayu,  
naxer marion webba,  
man nikan fausta.*

MAN:

Who are you to threaten me with your husband?

Of him I am not afraid;

Him I will beat,

You I will carry off to my country.

*Naurana were, nime bon wehanti,*

*nivor nauran' nana werion;*

*wone nana pakane,*

*nikun desune wokane.*

This song, they were sure would appeal to the people of Chudur Koinur, but they had still another new piece on their repertoire, not as long and elaborate, but of even more attractive tune and with one or two lines that never failed to draw laughter. In this two girls and between them a man take the scene; he is an inconstant husband and ignoring his wife, flirts with the other girl, following up his advances with a little couplet of gay tune:

I'll marry you, marry you, you

I'll marry,

Mangoes I will give you.

*Kika kika tane kika,*

*marka pandi sika,*

But his wife interferes and sings reproachfully:

Listen, listen, husband, listen,

I am nicely light of colour,

She is like a hairy bear,

She is like a hairy bear,

What pleasure can you have of her?

*Kenja, kenja, saiba, kenja,*

*nana manton bhuri bhuri,*

*ade manta yerjine mori,*

*ade manta yerjine mori,*

*tana bata gori.*

The husband then tries to calm his wife by promising to buy her jewels:

Listen dearest, listen dearest,

Jewels I will give to you,

How should I betray you?

*Kenja rani, kenja rani,*

*nik wisrawari kika,*

*niku batal dhoka?*

But the wife will not listen and declares that she is going to the bazaar:

It is I who will go to the market,  
In farewell I'll give you puffed rice.<sup>1</sup>

*Nana hatun nana daka,*

*kaiide mureng sika,*

The wife goes off, and the husband is left reflecting and singing in different tune, a sentimental song:<sup>2</sup>

Darling you have deceived me,

Oh minah of my life!<sup>3</sup>

Darling you have deceived me,

Oh minah of my life;

Rings for the ears I gave you,

Darling you have deceived me,

Oh minah of my life;

Studs for the nose I gave you,

Darling you have deceived me,

*Daga siti ba nime,*

*jiwa ta maino;*

*daga siti ba nime,*

*jiwa ta maino;*

*keci sursi tari yeton,*

*daga siti ba nime,*

*jiwa ta maino;*

*nosor sursi mukera yeton,*

*daga siti ba nime,*

1. The giving of puffed rice is regarded as a certain sign that the wife is deserting the husband; the literal translation of the line is: "into the hand I shall give puffed rice," but all Gonds hearing the song regarded this as a funny but unambiguous way of saying that she intends leaving her husband.

2. Some Gonds think that this song does not belong to this skit.

3. The minah is a vivacious chattering bird.

Oh manah of my life!  
Where are you hiding?  
Oh manah of my life!

*mana ta maino  
baga disaka ni ne?  
mana ta maino!*

In rehearsing these songs and making sure that all knew their rôles in the sketches the afternoon passed. Towards evening the *gusari* righted their make up, and then the procession formed again and took the way to Chudur Koinur. Dusk was falling and they were near the village when they met a few Koinur men, hurrying home from their fields: they were not at all gracious over the proposed visit, for on that very evening Chudur Koinur was—no doubt belatedly—celebrating the Divali feast. This was bad news for though the Koinur men did not actually say so it was obvious that on Divali night when every family is busy with its own domestic celebrations, Dandari dancers are anything but welcome. So the procession stopped and held council on the outskirts of the forest. A return home was out of the question and would have been contrary to all custom. Seti Harapnur, the village some two miles beyond Chudur Koinur, was ruled out because the Marlavai Dandari had gone there last year, and this year it was their turn to entertain the men of Seti Harapnur before they could again accept the hospitality of Seti Harapnur. So there was no other choice but the near at hand village of Persa Koinur. Although called 'Great' Koinur it is a village far smaller than 'Little' Koinur, and the Marlavai youths did not exactly relish the idea of performing their new song before a public of only a few families and being entertained to rather a meagre meal. But it was getting late and this alternative seemed preferable to walking many miles through the moonless night and perhaps arriving in a sleeping village.

At the village boundary the Dandari dancers heralded their arrival

by beating a small *hri* and only when it was quite dark did they begin again to beat the drums and in single file to march to the village where they were received in much the same manner as the Busimetta Dandari had been welcomed in Marlavai. But there were some adverse details to the instance have

to be noted for themselves from the well was considered a bad slip on the side of the hosts. But otherwise all went well and the night passed in singing dancing and the performance of burlesques. Not until late next morning did they return to Marlavai still grumbling over Chudur Koinur's delay in performing the Divali rites so that they conflicted with the plans of Dandari dancers.

That same afternoon drums resounded again through the valley of Marlavai and watchers on the high field platforms saw far away on



FIG. 83. A figure in the *para* dance.

FIG. 84. A figure in the *gumela* dance.





the rhythm in the Dandari dance

are in the women's Dandari dance



the Pitagudem path drummers and behind them a long string of women in gaily coloured *sari*. The fitful wind of that beautiful blue-skied day carried the women's song in waves through the valley and the drumming grew louder. At the stream the procession took the path through the high white headed grass that grows in hollows like droves of early morning mist, and skirting the village went up the hill to the Persa Pen shrine, singing and light of step. Close behind the drummers followed the leader, the wife of the Akara owner, carrying a bunch of *sukra*-grass and long-stemmed woodland flowers over her arm and behind her flocked smiling and shiny-haired women; last of all came two *gusari* with conical hats. Arriving in front of the Persa Pen's shrine each bowed to the ground in greeting, then the drums played and the women linking arms danced for a short while on the open space before the shrine, singing:

Great is the heat of Chait month!  
The great goddess, who is she, girl?  
Earth Mother is the great goddess.  
Who is her younger sister, girl?  
Who is her younger sister, girl?  
Durga Bhoani the goddess,  
Is her younger sister.  
Who is your younger sister, goddess?  
It is Tukai Bhoani, the goddess.  
Who is her younger sister, girl?  
Who is her younger sister, girl?  
Sisters seven, you goddesses,  
Great is the heat of Chait month.

*Chait mahinata yedi ata!*  
*Persa bai bade ha bai?*  
*Bhui Lachmi baye, bai and.*  
*Tana selar bade and?*  
*Tana selar bade and?*  
*Durga Bhoani bai and,*  
*tana selar and.*  
*Niwa selar bade ha bai?*  
*Tukai Bhoani bai and.*  
*Tana selar bade ha bai?*  
*Tana selar bade ha bai?*  
*Selar yerung mirate bai,*  
*Chait masuna yedi ho bai.*

After a short while the dance broke up and, filing through the millet, the women moved on to the shrines of Bhimana and Rajul Pen. Here, after greeting the gods, bowing before the shrines and dancing a fleeting figure, they left the *gusari* and taking the path came to the village, singing. In the sun-shelter the young men of Marlavai greeted their arrival with the roar of drums and all the womenfolk of Marlavai dressed in their best gathered smilingly round, recognizing in the visitors kinswomen of Pulera, many their own sisters and cousins.

For a moment both sets of drums rolled simultaneously, greeting each other, then the Marlavai drums stilled and above a *diminuendo* of the Pulera drums rose the first line of the women's dance-song. Laying arms over shoulders and led by the girl carrying the bunch of grass and flowers the women danced themselves into the sun-chequered square before the house of Kanaka Kodu, the *devari*. Many wore *sari* of a deep prussian blue with scarves of light red or coral pink thrown over head and shoulders, some wore wine-red *sari*, some saffron-yellow and one woman was clad in a deep strong orange. Those with no scarves wore the *sari* drawn over the head, and as they danced slightly stooping, one saw little of their faces. Heavy silver ornaments shone against the back-

ground of the brilliant coloured cloths smooth silver necklets, multiple chains weighted with heart shaped pendants and embossed belts of many plaques. Under scarves, swinging gracefully in the rhythm of the dance, heavy armlets and bracelets glistened, and on the feet were many toe rings and anklets. Girls, young and slender, some hardly full grown, a few quite elderly matrons, and two women great with child danced in the gay line, age seemed irrelevant, the grace of the dance and the song's melody, in which the aged were indeed the leaders, lent to all the joyous spirit of youth.

Curving gently, the long line soon circled the sun shelter, then without turning, reversed. The woman with the waving wand of white and purple flowers still headed the dance but the two leaders of song were in the centre one intoned each verse *unisono* with half the line and the other, with her half, repeated it antiphonally. They sang, not like the men, of garden fruits, amorous adventures or the ornaments of beautiful girls, but of kings and gods and mythical heroes.

Brothers five the rajas  
Palaces built in a line  
Carts lined up by the walls  
Such was the raja's town  
Fettered the horses neighed,  
Tethered the elephants swayed,  
On the ridge pole a monkey romped,  
On a bamboo a langur jumped,  
Long feathered peacocks strutted  
proudly,  
Short feathered pea hens trumpeted  
loudly  
Such was Raja Rama Rahuman's  
court.

*Tamun sasar rajalar,  
Wara pirti huya  
bhila pirti kasur  
Ital rajana nagur lagana  
Pagana koda bilandi panu  
mundana jeni jole manu,  
patuta kore kishma karsar,  
latuta munju hanuat uatar,  
daindel malu darbar nar  
kutsal malu jaho pasar,  
ital Raja Rama Rahimana raj lagar.*

While the visitors sang and danced, a pot of water and a footstool were brought by Lachu Patel's elder wife and youngest daughter, and Kanaka Kodu took the chief drummer by the hand and led him to have his feet washed. One after the other the drummers were ministered to and seated on cots beside the dancing place. Then Lachu Patel's wife, breaking into the dancing circle took the hand of the leading dancer and took her too to the footstool. The dancing stopped as all the women had their feet washed and were made to sit down on a mat spread before the veranda of Kodu's house. Now snuff was distributed among the women guests and leaves with tobacco to the Pulera drummers, and soon guests and hosts chattered together. Meanwhile the Marlavai men had been softly playing on their drums, but when the women rose to resume their dance, all drums stilled, and the singing



alone marked the rhythm for the dance:

*Rela rerela, rela rerela,*  
 Brothers seven the Panior were,<sup>1</sup>  
 To the brothers their sister Raju said:  
 "Oh, brother," Raju said,  
 Thus spoke the girl to the brothers,  
 "Tell us your sacred tale."  
 "Our tale is this, oh girl:  
 Bourmachua, is the place of the god,  
 Red like dal his eyes,<sup>2</sup>  
 Wheat-like is his body,  
 Like grain his teeth,  
 Like a castor seed his head,  
 His tail a spiked staff;  
 Fourteen are his hoods, oh girl,  
 If angered he stays not quiet,  
 Harmless he is, if not angered.  
 This is our sacred tale."

*Rela rerela, rela rerela,*  
*Tamun Yerwir Paniur ale,*  
*biye Raju indanir dadalir:*  
*Bari dada, indare Raju,*  
*dada indar dadara bai:*  
*Niwa bhirwar weha.*  
*Maweli bhirwar iteke bai:*  
*Bourmachua,*  
*masur dari kanrk,*  
*gohdana mandol,*  
*wanji perek palk,*  
*tsikiti nerondata tala,*  
*tutari baida tokor;*  
*chauda birking mantang, bai,*  
*songung watcke kareke mano,*  
*songung waiweke batai sile.*  
*Ade nawa bhirwar.*

They had not got very far with this hymn of the seven Panior brothers, the mythical ancestors of Maravi, Mesram and other seven-brother clans, when the *gusari* crept up to the circle with their characteristic step. In broad daylight their entry was less dramatic than the Busimetta *gusari*'s emergence from the darkness, but they were nevertheless possessed of the same irresponsible and boisterous spirit: they broke up the dancing circle with yells and shouts, capered about showing off their antics, picked out pretty girls and chucked them under the chin, plucked at a beautiful ornament and scattering the women grouped on the veranda invaded the *devari*'s house, ostensibly in search of food. But ultimately they allowed themselves to be led to the two hostesses where their feet were washed. When they were safely seated and smoking leaf-pipes, the women resumed their dance and their song at the verse where the *gusari* had interrupted:

Brothers seven the Panior,  
 "Where is their cattle, oh sister?"  
 "At Gaurapura<sup>3</sup> is the cattle."  
 Panior grasps the herdsman's staff,  
 And wraps a thin cloth round himself,  
 On his feet Panior puts sandals,  
 To the cattle-pens he wanders.  
 Panior reaches the cattle pens,  
 Panior opens the doors,  
 To the doors Panior bows deeply,<sup>4</sup>

*Tamur yerwir Paniur,*  
*ura dhanwan бага, bai?*  
*Gaurapura dhanwa manmar*  
*kaide sari-barga piana Paniur*  
*sapur sela mutsa Paniur,*  
*kadc suta kerana Paniur,*  
*doḍita sari daiana, Paniur,*  
*Dodi yewa lator Paniur,*  
*jopa suti kinur Paniur,*  
*jopata kalk arana Paniur,*

1. Panior are the mythical ancestors of the seven-brother phratry; Panior is singular, Paniur plural; in the English text I have used Panior for both forms.

2. This description refers to the snake deity Boinagbojun or Sri Shek worshipped by all seven-brother clans and believed to have seven hoods; the doubling of this number in the song is a poetic exaggeration.

3. A village near Keslapur in Utnur Taluq.

4. A guardian spirit, Moisama, is believed to dwell in the doorways of cattle pens.

Then Panior leads out the cattle  
Where will Panior graze the cattle?<sup>1</sup>  
To Arkapura<sup>1</sup> goes Panior  
"Let's water the cows, oh brother"  
"Where shall we water them  
brother?"

"Let's water them at Sasarakunda."<sup>2</sup>  
There arrives Panior  
"Where shall we rest the cattle  
Oh brother?"  
'At Gaurapura shall be the rest-  
place"

Back to his house goes Panior,  
Washes himself with hot water,  
He begins to eat his food,  
Afterwards washes his hands  
Panior smokes a leaf-pipe  
Grasping his herdsman's staff  
Panior goes to graze the cattle  
Driving off the cattle  
Panior takes the cattle to the pasture  
Panior grazes the cattle  
"The sun is sinking brother"  
Home drives Panior the cattle  
Drives it to the cattle pens,  
Panior tethers the cows  
Panior fastens the door  
Panior walks homewards  
Walks then to his house  
Paniek, (his wife) heats gruel,  
Panior eats his dinner  
Paniek eats her dinner,  
Paniek puts out the bedsteads  
There Panior lies down to rest,  
Soundly asleep is Panior,  
Tired he is, tired he has grown  
Kandrak grunts the bull,  
Runs round and round the stockade,  
Draws his four legs up to his chest,  
Err, he jumps across  
Roaring he rushes off,  
Running bounds the god-like bull,  
Where does the bull go?  
Shampur<sup>3</sup> reaches the bull,  
Grazes under a pipal tree,  
Kandrak, kandrak grunts the bull,  
Away rushes the god-like bull  
Where does the bull go then?  
Utnur reaches the bull  
Of sure thorns the fence,

*danua suti kinere Panior,  
Baga meha daner Panior?<sup>1</sup>  
Arkapura uonur  
Murang yer uhkat, dada  
Baga yer uhkat, dada.*

*Sasarkundum yer uhkat, dada.  
Sesa latore, Panior.  
Marat, baba manda  
minduskat, dada?<sup>2</sup>  
"Gaurapura manda minduskat.*

*Ran sonda lator, Panior,  
yehk pani tungana, Panior,  
yeu kha latore Panior.  
Kak nora lator Panior,  
chulang unde undana,  
laide sar-barga piana Panior  
dhan ca meha danire Panior.  
Dhanua teha latore Panior  
dhanua meha uonire Panior  
dhanua meha latore Panior.  
Pord unde sotaki dada  
Dhanua malusa latore, Panior,  
dodi taga uoia latore Panior,  
murang sorusa latore Panior  
jopa keha latore Panior  
Ron sonda latore Panior,  
basa sonda latore Panior  
Jasa yehk tungana Paniek,  
Panior yeu kiana  
Paniek yeu kiana,  
palang uata latang Paniek;  
agane munda latore Panior  
nidora bhanje manire Panior,  
Panior a uasi uani, a uasi uator.  
Kandrak injere borum dukri kiya,  
golar tsakar tinar borum,  
nalung kalkun tsati taga umar,  
burr huland uatta;  
borum tsauk piar dukri tiser  
utanta, uitare deva;  
baga yeua latore borum?<sup>3</sup>  
Shampur yeu ana borum,  
ali bude meiar borum,  
kandrak, kandrak hanikar kha borum,  
borum tsauka piar deva;  
baga yeua latore borum?  
Utnur yeua latore borum  
Sure tsahkna bandora,*

1 Village near Keslapur

2 The famous falls of the Penganga in Bath Taluq

3, Shampur is a village between Utnur and Keslapur,

Through which no fly could pass  
 Through which no gnat could pass.  
 Round the fence runs the bull,  
*Kandrak, Kandrak*, roars the bull,  
 Draws his four legs up to his chest,  
*Brrr*, he jumps across.  
 Feeds his fill on sugar cane,  
 Draws his four legs up to his chest,  
*Brrr*, he jumps back.  
 Then the bull rushes off;  
 Where does the bull go?  
 Shampur reaches the bull,  
 Standing under the *pipal* tree  
*Kandrak, kandrak* grunts the bull.  
 Brothers two the Kolis came  
 With guns on their shoulders  
 "Let's look at our sugar-cane;  
 brother,"

Along the Kolis came  
 The Kolis saw their sugar-cane,  
 "Who has eaten our sugar-cane,  
 brother?"

Then the Kolis saw the foot-prints,  
 "Whose bull has eaten it, brother?"  
 The Kolis followed the foot-prints  
 Under the *pipal* tree stood the bull.  
 "There is the bull, oh brother!"  
 The Koli took aim  
 The Koli hit the bull,  
 The god-like bull fell dead.  
 Then came Panior  
 The Kolis began to cut up the bull,  
 Panior, coming, saw it,  
 From afar he saw it;  
 "This is my bull, oh brothers,  
 "What a sorrowful tale, oh  
 brothers!"

Over his eyes Panior drew his turban,  
 Panior began to cry,  
 "Do not take my strength from me."  
 So praying, Panior bowed down,  
 "Offerings, we'll give you, oh lord."  
 Then Panior went away,  
 Panior turned homewards.  
 "A sorrowful thing has come to  
 pass!"

Paniek, his wife, began to cry.  
 The Panior brothers grew poor,  
 Here and there went the Panior;  
 Their cattle went, their wealth went,  
 In poverty lived the Panior.  
 As labourers the Panior worked,

*wisi gira karoki deva*  
*nule gira karo*  
*Gowar tsakar tiriare bozum,*  
*Kandrak kandrak indare bozum,*  
*nalung kalkun tsati taga umar*  
*brrr huland wafta.*  
*Paka uskun tindare bozum,*  
*nalung kalkun tsati taga umar,*  
*brrr huland wafta.*  
*bozum tsauke piar deva;*  
*baga yewa latare bozum?*  
*Shampura yewane bozum,*  
*alit bud nilare bozum*  
*kandrak, kandrak dukri kiar bozum.*  
*Tamun iwir Korir deva,*  
*setate bhaude wafana Korir.*  
*Mawang usk surkat dada;*

*bara waiar later Korir,*  
*uske surar later Korir.*  
*Mawan uskun batalte titaki, dada?*

*Koji suranta Korir,*  
*bova te bozum titaki dada?*  
*Koji pia later Korir,*  
*alite bud nila lata bozum.*  
*Agane bozum nilta dada,*  
*Majura pera later Korir,*  
*bozumun paia later Korir,*  
*bozum saia lata ki deva.*  
*Panior waia later deva*  
*Bozumun aska later Korir,*  
*Panior wasi sura later deva,*  
*laknale wasi surana deva;*  
*mawate bozum audki dada,*  
*nadan gohti ataki dada!*

*Kanrkun poro sela wafana Panior,*  
*barang ara later Panior,*  
*mawate sat nime bufite kimar.*  
*Kalke ara later Panior.*  
*niwate puja tunkom Raitari,*  
*pajate malsi danir Panior,*  
*Ronete sonda later Panior.*  
*Nadan gohti ataki!*

*Rani Paniek ara latangki deva.*  
*Lai lasten anire Panior,*  
*bendur hake anire Panior;*  
*dane sota mal sota deva.*  
*Panior langa ater, deva.*  
*bhuti sonda later Panior,*

For work they went no work they  
found

In poverty lived the Panior  
The youngest brother alone  
Retained cattle and wealth,  
The elder brothers worked as  
labourers

Brought wood to the youngest's  
village

To his house they brought it,  
There they made the wood  
The youngest brother saw them,  
Rags round the loins they wore,  
On the head a strip of cloth  
Embracing each other the Panior  
wept

Wife called Panior Wife  
My elder brothers are here wife,  
Hot water of twelve rivers,  
Cold water of twelve rivers"  
To the wash place Paniek took them  
Go wash with water brothers"  
To the wash place went the Panior  
Then Panior opened his box  
(Took out) a silk bordered loin-cloth  
Such a loin-cloth donned Panior  
On his head Panior tied a turban  
A three feet wide brass-plate  
Cleaned and scrubbed Paniek,  
Then Paniek prepared a meal  
Water he put into goblets  
The Panior washed their hands  
The Panior entered the palace  
Paniek made ready the meal,  
The Panior saluted the gods  
Five mouthfuls they ate gladly,  
Five mouthfuls they ate sadly,  
After the meal the Panior rose  
The Panior washed their hands,  
Then the Panior went outside,  
Broke betelnut into pieces  
Took teeth-colouring betel leaves,  
Tongue biting lime,  
All these together they chewed

Where will you go now, oh  
brothers?

Let us all stay in one place,  
As the youngest I'll sit in the  
court house,

You brothers see to the fields"  
So as before so now again  
Cattle and wealth was with them,  
The Panior ruled as rajas  
*Rere rela, rere rela*

*bhuti sokele bhuti putrak ata deva,*

*Panior langa ater deva  
Sestator tamur mandara deva  
uoni dhanmal mandana deva,  
tadahir bhuti danir deva,*

*tamuna nagure kastan uonir,*

*uonate rone danir deva,  
kastang tron uatanir deva,  
tamur sura later deva  
naride ginda uatak deva  
talade tsirkuti uaiare deva  
jome masi jomi masi arana Panior*

*Rani, indana rani Panior,  
naur tadahir andire rani  
parenda gangar kasute yer,  
parenda gangar murungta yer  
Angurite uoiana Paniek deva,  
yer tungnen soniki dada  
Anguri aia later Panior  
Pera ugi kiana Panior,  
Isa marangina dhotre deva,  
dhotre kani kiana Panior,  
talade langar sut kinir Panior  
Mund kallenja jata uti liar deva,  
jat uti bare kinung Paniek,  
anba tsauri kinung Paniek,  
jarite yer sinung Paniek  
Kak nora later Panior  
andargande daiana Panior,  
anba sauri kiana Paniek deva,  
deu jahar tungana Panior,  
syung buhang sulnang tindana,  
syung buhang duknang tindana,  
jeui kiu bara teda later Panior,  
kak nora later Panior,  
bahari pena later Panior,  
pakan porial supari ura,  
dat rengial kat uona,  
jib lonial tsunaba uona  
atsonun torde watana Panior  
Inge бага dakite dada?*

*Samdir undi jaga asana deva  
kachari dijan takutana tamur,*

*uaur setne mirat dada  
tole bahan matat ahan,  
dhan mal manta ura deva  
raj kiu puana Panior  
tere rela, tere rela*

When they had finished their long song, the Pulera women, sat a while with their friends of Marlavai gossiping on doorsteps and under the eaves of houses. Then the whole company of visitors moved to the house of Soyam Maru, the second owner of Akara drums in the village, and there the ceremonial welcome and the washing of feet were repeated. In the old man's courtyard the women danced, singing the fragment of a longer song:

Twelve ploughs large is the field,  
Five ploughs large is the garden,  
"Rani," says the Raja, "Rani," he  
says,

*Wisa serkna undi waur persa manta,  
siyung serkna singaruari,  
rani, indana rajal, rani, indana,*

*sarke wakre jawa rani,*

"In the early morning make the food  
ready,

*hoye inda lata ho rani;*

*tinda unda anung ranik.*

"Yes I will make it," says the Rani;  
"Food and drink prepare, oh Rani."

*Nidora bhanje manung ranik,*

*undi lewde narmanur ranik,*

*undi kewde kenjanur ranik,*

*undi kanrde suranur ranik,*

*undi kanrde narmanur ranik.*

*Mahadevoana gogri*

*tina marede singali gagara*

*dema marede parangali gagara*

The Rani goes to sleep,  
With one ear open, sleeps the Rani,  
With one ear open, listens the Rani,  
With one eye open, watches the Rani,  
With one eye open, sleeps the Rani.  
Mahadeo's cock,

His right wing a fan of five feathers,  
His left wing a fan of twelve  
feathers,

Fluttering he shakes his feathers,  
The Rani hears the noise.

*khala khala jari kiar,*

*tana nand kenjana bai.*

It was not long however before Maru's two daughters-in-law brought brass bowls of millet and *dal* from the house, and of leaf plates the guests ate a small snack; other women of Marlavai invited groups of guests to a quickly prepared meal. There was no public entertainment with a proper meal in the open, but all the visiting women and their male companions found hospitality in individual houses. Later in the afternoon the women danced again, and when the sun was nearly setting, they formally bade farewell to their hosts, touching the men's feet and greeting the women by raising the hostesses' hands to the forehead. Singing they left the village in single file; with the drummers going ahead, the colourful crowd faded into the twilight.

During the next few days men from Jangaon and women from Dhanora came to dance at Marlavai and the men of Marlavai went to visit Usegaon. In the old days it is said, the Dandari dancing lasted much longer and troupes of dancers moved from village to village, often without returning home for several days. But now Dandari dancers seldom visit more than two or three villages a year, and this is done in a certain order, the guests of this year being hosts in the next, when they are expected to equal, if not better, the entertainment received. Whereas men always arrange so that they reach their destination at dusk, and stay there till next day, women Dandari dancers seldom stay



The village-guardian shall the lamp  
rite honour, oh Balemai.

*naŋen Akita aruti Balemai.*

The house-goddess shall the lamp rite  
honour, oh Balemai.

*Rota Lachmita aruti Balemai.*

The *gusari* then replaced the handful of grain on the brass tray and two of the dancers taking the tray between them swang it in the rhythm of the dance, and two other boys holding between them a couple of dance sticks swang them in similar manner. Then the plate was returned and if there had been no coppers on it, the *gusari* remained at the door, clinking their anklet bells, till the woman reappeared and handed them some coins.

So they went from door to door, the *gusari* never forgetting their temporary privilege of irresponsibility; in one courtyard they picked some climbing marrows and carried them off in their bags, and in another they tried to catch some small chicks, but were not successful.

At sunset men and boys gathered under the mahua tree near the well and the Kola Buri rite was performed at the stone sacred to Bhimana where they had offered the jawari ears to Hura Pen on Bogi day. Here all the symbols and accessories of the Dandari dancers were laid out in three groups; in the middle immediately in front of the Bhimana stone, the *para*, the large *dapna* drums and the drum-sticks, the dancers' bell-anklets and silver ornaments; to the left a new cloth, the cylindrical drums, the kettle drums and the *turbuli*; and to the right the *gusari* hats, clubs, bell-beset holsters and other ornaments, as well as a few of the ears of new jawari millet which the *gusari* had foraged.

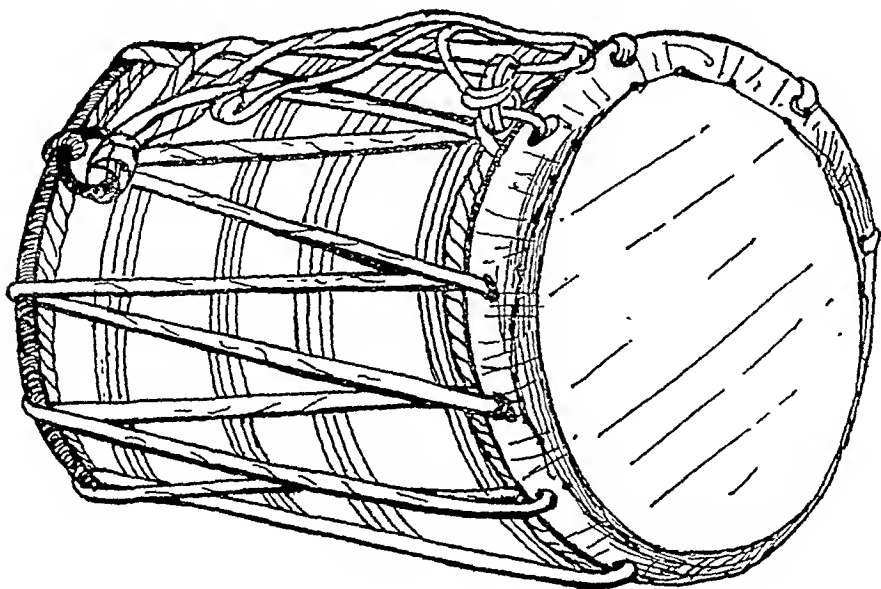


FIG. XXX. *Wooden cylindrical drum with hide membranes.*

After the usual preparations and an invocation of Sipiserma and Dundria Raur, the patrons of the Dandari dancers, Kanaka Kodu sacrificed a fowl in front of the central heap, Soyam Chitru, the elder son of Maru, the owner of one set of Akara drums, five small chicks in front of the drums to the left and the *gusari* one small chick before their hats. They sprinkled the blood on the sacred Bhumana stone and all the Dandari requisites. Then a cow was dragged before the altar and beheaded—it had been brought cheap, on account of its barrenness, from the gifts which the Dandari dancers had received in the villages they had visited, and it was sacrificed as much for the sake of its meat as for the purposes of the rite. The rice used for the sacrificial food was that which ever since the Boji rite had been tied in a new cloth to Kanaka Kodu's *para*. The *gusari* then went to the stream and washed off all their paint and returned dressed in fresh *dhoti*.

After the food-offerings had been duly placed before stones and ritual objects the men remained long gathered round the mahua tree, cooking the beef in large cauldrons and gossiping about the events of the Dandari days. The gayest week of the whole year had come to an end and with it the time of nightly gatherings to the sound of the *gumela* songs and the clatter of dance sticks. Dancing of a different type there would be at the feasts of clan-deities, and weddings might give an opportunity for pantomimes and musical skits. But *para* and *gumela* would be silent for eight long months, and the gods of the Dandari dancers were hidden farewell.

### *The Harvest of the Great Millet*

By the time the Dandari dancing ends, the month of Karti, corresponding to October November, is well progressed. It is a month without distinctive ceremonies at the full moon or the concluding dark moon, and solid work follows upon the series of festivities that enlivened the preceding weeks. The great millet<sup>1</sup> is fully in ear and rapidly ripening. The fields need constant watching for a swarm of voracious green parrots, clinging to the strong stalks and picking out the grain, if

What  
judged  
other

By the time the great millet has been reaped the millet is left to the mercy of birds, and by harvest time hardly a grain remains in the ears. By night other dangers threaten—sambar, spotted deer and blue bull invade the

However, are not debarred from nocturnal watches, and many a field is temporarily abandoned to the inroads of game,

<sup>1</sup> *Sorghum vulgare*





FIG. 87. Reaping the *jau.ari* millet.

FIG. 88. Winnowing the grain on the threshing floor.





Fig. 8 Threshing the millet with bullocks

Fig. 9 Threshing the millet by hand



and many a marriage shattered when two young people on neighbouring platforms, tiring of a lonely vigil, succumb to the spell of romance in the moonlight that glitters on the rustling millet leaves, with no one to intrude upon their stolen meeting.

The Gonds do not make much use of traps or snares. Sometimes they set loop snares, motivated by a bent bamboo spring which tightens the noose when released, and in these *lati*-traps porcupines, hares and sometimes even small antelope are caught. Spring traps (*chandora*) hidden in the crops are used for snaring jungle fowl and peafowl, and sometimes even hares, while stone fall-traps (*dapka*), that crush the victim when the trigger is released, are erected to deal with field rats. But Gonds, unlike Kolams, have no big game traps in which wild pig and sambar may be caught.

After the first fruit offering on Bogi day the half-ripened millet ears are often roasted in the hot ashes of outdoor fires and the green grains rubbed between the palms and eaten. Small groups of men gather in the fields to enjoy the millet during the few days when it is soft and tender, cattle boys take ears to roast in the jungle, and passing a field platform you are often invited to a snack.

But by the end of November the millet is ripe and each householder cuts five ears, ties them to the centre pole of his threshing floor, and performs the rite that precedes the reaping. This bunch of ears is called *sanje* but there is no special term for the rite itself, the Gonds referring to it simply as *hura waṭana*, which means literally "to put the millet ears." A chicken may be sacrificed at this ceremony or equally appropriate is an offering of a little cooked food to the Earth Mother and the clan-deities with a prayer for further blessings and help.

The millet is reaped by both men and women, who work side by side, using a sickle to cut the stalks, hard and as thick as a thumb, about a hand span above the ground; bundles of jawari are thrown behind the reaper as they are cut, and are collected afterwards. This way of reaping is called *arusiana* and is followed up by the severing of the ears from the stalks, a process called *urusiana*.<sup>1</sup> While the leafy stalks are stacked as fodder, the ears are gathered and laid on strong bamboo mats (*garse*) near the threshing-floor, which is always close to the field. The best and largest ears are separated and are set aside as seed-grain. So too are the ears of a special variety of great millet called *chauwur jona*, because of the way the grains, each on a long stem, fall loosely like the hair of a flywhisk; only small quantities of *chauwur jona* are grown in each field, and its quality does not seem to be superior to the ordinary jawari with compact ears. Perhaps its resemblance to the *chauwur*, the sacred symbol of the Persa Pen, invests it with an auspicious character.

1. Gonds differentiate exactly between the different ways of harvesting: reaping small millets is called *kisana* and cutting rice or maize *koiana*.

After all the ears have been spread on the bamboo mats, the threshing floor (*khara*) is levelled and plastered with cow-dung. In its centre stands the post (*meri*) to which five jawari ears have been tied. The householder then sacrifices a fowl, goat or chicken in front of the ears spread out on mats, praying to the goddesses of wealth.

In the name of Lachmi we offer a  
goat

Lachmi of corn Lachmi of cattle  
Seven Lachmi sisters we worship you  
Give us good fortune.

*Lachmi porode bakra simar*

*Ana Lachmi, Dhana Lachmi,  
Selar yerung Lachmi kalkarmar,  
tsokof mak sim*

The head of the sacrificial animal is then severed, and set before the heaped ears, but the sacrificer or any of his helpers takes the animal by the hind legs and drags the bleeding carcase once round the *garze* and the *khara*. Then the liver is roasted and offered to all the Lachmis and the meat is cooked, the *nuot* is eaten on the threshing floor, but the rest of the meat and the millet may be taken to the village.

Early next morning the ears, or if the harvest is large, part of the ears are spread on the threshing floor and a pair of bullocks muzzled with string bags is tied to the centre pole and driven round and round. Sometimes men or boys walk in the bullock's wake as much to hasten the animals' pace as to tread out the grain. Only people with small harvests thresh millet by hand with wooden mallets (Figs. 89-90).

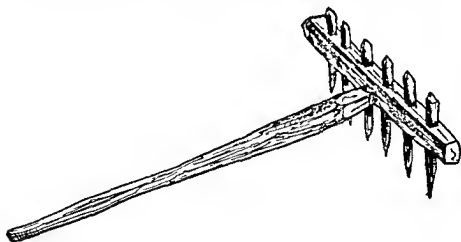


FIG XXXI Wooden rake (*dalra*)

When the grain has been threshed out, the stalks and the stripped ears are thrown aside and the grain is heaped round the pole in an even, level heap (*madun*) nearly one foot deep. The stripped ears are then burnt, and a small quantity of the millet is mixed with the ashes and a little water. With this black paste the householder draws a

rough pattern on the circular heap of threshed grain; thereby he hopes to secure the grain against the depredations of malignant spirits and devils, rats and mice. When it is completed he arranges the bullocks' muzzles (*muske*), a rake (*datra*) and a driving stick in symmetrical order on the grain-heap. The threshing-floor has now the festive appearance of a well ordered scene set for the final rite. The householder takes some sugar and *dal* and offers them to the Lachmis and Anesirar with a short prayer:

Grain Lachmi, Cattle Lachmi,  
Earth Lachmi, Anesirar,  
Give us your favour, give us food.

*Ana Lachmi, Dhana Lachmi,  
Bhui Lachmi, Anesirar,  
Barkat sim, tsokot maku jawa sim.*

This rite of the jawari threshing-floor is not performed for any other crop such as the small millets, maize, rice or wheat.

Immediately after the offerings have been made, the implements are taken off the heap, the pattern is broken up, and winnowing begins on one side of the threshing floor.

The winnowing of great millet is generally done by men; they wait for a day of light breezes, and taking the husk and grain in winnowing fan or basket, hold it high over their heads, slightly tilted so that the grain spills in a steady stream. Sometimes the winnowers stand on low benches and baskets of millet are handed up by helpers, the additional height allowing even the slightest breeze to separate grain and husk. (Fig. 88).

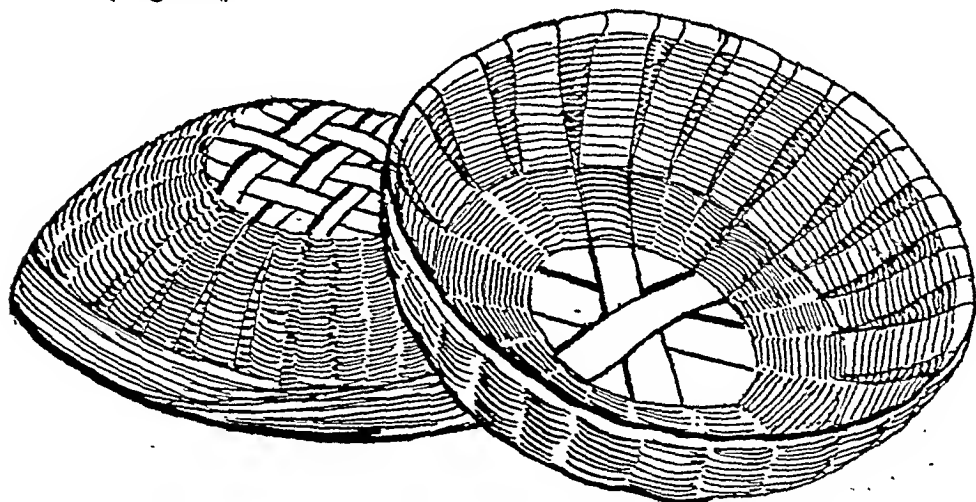


FIG. XXXII. Bamboo baskets such as used in winnowing.

When all the rain crops have been threshed and winnowed, the ears tied to the pole in the centre of the threshing floor are taken down, roasted and offered to Bhui Lachmi, the Earth Deity.

The harvesting of the oil-seeds, sometimes begun directly after the first-fruit offering at the Dassera feast, but often delayed until after the

Dandari time, coincides with the reaping of the millet. After a simple invocation of the Earth Mother, which may be accompanied by the sacrifice of a chicken, men and women start cutting the pods of the oil plants with sickles, they fill them into baskets and carry them to the village where it is generally the women who, sitting in the courtyards in the evening sunlight, crush the hard pods with wooden mallets.

Kartu, the month when the last of the rain-crops are harvested, is also the time when most of the memorial feasts (*pitre*) in honour of deceased relatives are performed. At these feasts, which in Book II will be described in detail, a cow is sacrificed and the spirit of the deceased propitiated by various rites and offerings.

### *The Feasts of Bhimana*

The month of Sau sees the end of the millet harvest and the picking of the cotton, the last of the rain crops. No rite initiates this work, which is probably a fairly recent addition to the Gonds' annual schedule of seasonal works. All the fruits of field and garden that ripen during and after the rains have been eaten except for the climbing beans (*kori shenya*) which ramble over hedges and dry branches stuck up at the edges of the home fields. But some time during Sau, usually about full moon, the first fruits of these beans are offered to Bhimana the whole month. In all the new beans is offered

to the shrine only Aki Pen and Auwal receive their usual shares of the first fruits, and each householder invokes Bhimana together with his clan god when he offers some of the new beans before the *pen komta* inside his kitchen. From that day on and for many weeks to come these excellent large beans form an important item in the Gonds' diet.

Bhimana or Bhupal Pen is the only deity of the Gond pantheon, in whose worship they rely largely on the services of priests of another tribe. True, many Gonds hold idols of Bhimana in hereditary possession and perform his rites in the same manner as those of a *pani* family deity.

The *notams*, who are indeed the priests and guardians of all the great Bhimana shrines in the hills of Adilabad. The most famous centres of Bhimana worship are at Dantanpalli, Pangri Madra, Goleti and Sirsela in the Tilam area and Indanpur in the Pedda Vagu valley, affiliated to each of the great Bhimanas<sup>1</sup> known under the name of these villages are Bhimanas of lesser importance, and in some cases it is still known how these split off from their parent

<sup>1</sup> Though both Gonds and Kolams agree that there is really only one Bhimana, they worship him in the shape of many local Bhimanas, sometimes loosely referred to as brothers. For a discussion of the cult of Bhimana see also p. 36.

deity. Once in three years the ritual objects of every great Bhimana are taken in procession through many villages to the banks of one of the great rivers of the Adilabad District, generally the Godavari, where the idols are given a ceremonial bath. In the intervening years the symbols though taken out of the shrine, are only carried to the nearby village of the Kolam priest and sometimes also to one or two Gond settlements in the vicinity.

The Gonds are free to attend the feasts of Kolams at the shrine of Bhimana and at places like Dantanpalli there are indeed flags put up by Gonds in fulfilment of vows. Generally, however, they do not partake in the final rites at the shrine, but give their offerings at the time when the idols tour their village. The conduct of the ceremonies and ritual lies there too in the hands of the Kolam priest and his assistants, and the Gond worshippers are only expected to provide the offerings and animals for sacrifice and to entertain the Kolams who come in the train of the god.

There is no important Bhimana shrine in the vicinity of Marlavai<sup>1</sup> and only once in three years are the idols of the Dantanpalli Bhimana brought to the village. But while I was in Madura, the large Gond village near the great Bhimana shrine of Pangri Madura, I watched the ceremonial visit of the Pangri Bhimana and the celebration of a feast given by a Gond in honour of the god.

The moon of Sati was only in its first quarter, but the Kolams said that there was no need to wait for the rites until the full moon. From the great shrine in the jungle, the most artistic god-shrine I have seen anywhere in the Gond country, they took all the ritual objects, including a large bunch of peacock-feathers in a carved holder representing Bhimana and a similar bunch representing Rajul Pen. These they took in procession to their village and arranged them in front of the house of the hereditary priest (*delak*) where they were kept for three days. During this time anyone who had made a vow and planned to fulfil it that year, or anyone desirous of entertaining the god, thereby soliciting his particular blessings, sent a message or came himself and told the priest of his intention.

That year two Gonds of Madura each from a different settlement, had invited the god to their houses. Maravi Lachmu who was not under the obligation of any vow and Atram Bhimu who a long time ago, during an illness of his wife, had promised the Bhimana of Pangri an offering, and was now preparing to redeem his word. So after three days the ritual objects were taken out in procession with drums and flutes, and after a fleeting visit to the village gods of Chintal Madura, the Bhimana was set up in the courtyard of Maravi Lachmu's house. There for many hours Kolams, both men and women, danced with jingling

1. The Bhimana left there by a Kolam and annexed by Kurenga Madu (cf. p. 326), ranks only among the minor family gods.

anklets in front of the symbols, and late that evening Lachmu sacrificed a cock and entertained all the Kolams as well as the people of his hamlet to a meal. For one night the symbols remained in his courtyard guarded by the Kolam priest. On the afternoon of the next day the symbols of the gods and the ritual objects were carried to the main Gond settlement of Madura and to the sound of drums and flutes put down before the Aki stones under a big tree. While some Kolams danced, the Kolam *devari* of Madura scattered turmeric powder on the Aki and the nearby altar of Nat Auwal, the Village Mother. All the Gond men of the village then came and saluted the Bhūmana symbols with deep reverences, a little later the women brought winnowing fans with grain and bean leaves to be blessed by the god, and the Kolam priest arranged these before the peacock feather bunches, where they remained for some time. Incited by the beating of drums a Gond began to tremble, took up the god's bell beset leather straps and laid them over his shoulders. Then he grasped four whips, that lay in a basket among other ritual objects and gave one to the Gond Raja Telang Rao, one to the

others and whips. No one took much more notice of him, for at that moment a Kolam, the brother of the priest of the Pangri Bhūmana, became possessed and with fierce movements rushed hither and thither over the open place, at first without bells or whips. Then he donned the bell bolsters, took up the whips and laid them round the necks of the same four men. The drums rolled as the Kolam staggered backwards and forwards ran from one whipper to the other, and, standing fully erect invited with a hoarse shout '*Ayak ko!*' the stroke of the whip. With his wavy hair flying, his muscular body naked but for a small apron and a wild expression on his coarse dark face he appeared far more demonic than any Gond *bhaktal* I have ever seen, and his violent hectic movements contrasted vividly with the cool unperturbed watchfulness of the four whippers, who again and again hit with steady and forceful strokes at the quivering arms raised to the sky.

At last the possessed man seemed to regain control over his limbs, and going up to the whippers, he embraced them and gathered the

Struggling for breath as if every word cost him an enormous effort, he began in abrupt sentences his prophecy, but though he was obviously still in a trance, he spoke in Gondi and not in Kolami his own language.

1. The *devari* of the Gond village is a Kolam, but he is not the priest of the great Bhūmana.
2. The Kolami name for Bhūmana is *Ayak*.



An Auwal had come to the village, he revealed, to carry off men and children, but Bhimana had curbed her deadly intentions. "Take the grain if you must," the god had said, "but leave my people; the people I will not let you take." So the prospects for the cold weather crops were bad, but no one had died of epidemics.—"What then shall we do?" asked the priest.—"Do not worship any other Auwal; go on worshipping the Village Auwal. More troubles, coughs and fever will come, but no one will die of them. Do not leave this village and settle elsewhere, but go on worshipping this Auwal. Bhimana will see that no harm befalls you."

Thus ended the prophecy, and the Gond women of the village approached the altar to collect their winnowing fans with the blessed grain. The Kolam *devari* took a little from each fan and placed it before the idols and then daubed the women's and children's forehead with powdered turmeric. One child who had been ill, he beat gently with one of the sacred whips, and then came an old woman, crippled with rheumatism, who stood upright with hands raised in prayer over her head while the *devari* brought the whip two or three times lightly over her limbs and body. Ultimately the women took the blessed grain back to their houses and mixed it with their grain-store.

As dusk fell late-comers from the fields came to pay their respects to the god, making obeisance or a deep reverence before the idols. Shortly afterwards the priest took up the feather-holders and ritual objects and handed them to other Kolams. A procession formed and all moved to the settlement of Atram Bhima, who had invited the god for that night.

In the field outside the hamlet the procession stopped, and soon the host appeared carrying water in a silver vessel. Ceremonially greeting the god he sprinkled water on the idols and the carriers, then scattering water as he went, he led the way to his house. In the courtyard his two wives were waiting to wash the feet of all the men in the procession. But first they poured water on the iron spikes of the feather-holders considered the "feet of the god," and this water was caught in a bowl and later used to make gruel of which all members of the household ate. Then the feet of all the men and last of all the feet of the *devari* and *bhaktal* were washed, and the host's elder wife brought a large heap of cow-dung and prepared a place for the altar by plastering a longish space in front of his house. Over this the priest waved incense and the *bhaktal* drew under the priest's directions a design with vermilion and turmeric powder: ten squares in a long line. Holes were dug in two of the central squares, and the feather-holders inserted so that they stood firm and erect. The host's wife brought a winnowing fan full of grain and the priest poured it out before the idols in a line all along the design. Then all the ritual objects, pottery horses, brass horses, incense burners, bells and whips, drum-sticks and the like,

were arranged on the turmeric pattern. All the men present, Kolams and Gonds, formed a circle, stood for a while in silent prayer and then prostrated themselves before the idols.

The promised goat was sacrificed in the usual manner, but it was only late in the evening that the main offerings of food were placed before the idols. The night was bitterly cold and the many guests who filled the host's courtyard sat round fires on the verandas of houses and in the open shed of an oil press. The Kolam priest began the rite of dedication by burning incense, all the Kolams and several Gonds including the host then stood in a semi-circle and prayed.

See, you have come to our house,  
sons daughters children crops  
bullocks cows calves goats sheep  
may they be well and sound  
give us your blessing give us  
good luck you we salute  
If you do not look on us with favour  
we will not invoke your name.

*Sura nime ma ron uati,  
maru miar bal gopal panta pala  
konda mura, piakal, here, gore  
ni ustap pal ustap uandana,  
nime pahiti mandana,  
jayajkar nana nik Ram Ram  
itsor tala tahiti surakeke soteke mra  
porol mutom<sup>1</sup>*

The priest then placed twelve rice balls, each on a leaf of the mura tree<sup>2</sup> before the idols: six for Bhimana, two for Rajul Pen, and two for Auwal called by the Kolams Polakama. The host's wife brought mullet breads and fried cakes, and the priest crumbled a little, scattering it on all the leaves. Then he stood with folded hands before the offerings and prayed silently in Kolami.

Walking in front when we go, guarding us from behind when  
we come give us your protection, may all our works prosper,  
may our prayers not remain ineffective, you we salute."

There was a short pause and a Gond whispered to me that in former times when they had liquor to offer, the gods came rapidly and in great force on the *bhaktal*, sometimes even during the offering of the food and liquor.

That evening it was not long before a middle aged Gond showed signs of possession. He was a slender, inconspicuous man who had as yet not played any prominent rôle. Now he approached the idols with tottering steps, donned the bell bands, but did not touch the whips, always trembling he moved about on his knees before the idols, touched

and con-  
ig with  
of the  
possessed Kolam that afternoon, and seemed almost like a sequence of conventionalized ritual postures. At last he embraced the idols, put down the bell holsters and emerged from his trance. Little attention

1 This was the prayer of the Gonds but it is probable that the Kolams prayed in Kolami.

2 *Butea frondosa*.

was paid to his behaviour, there was no whipping and no one tried to draw from him a prophecy. The Kolam *bhaktal* was not possessed again that night, and as soon as the food was ready all sat down to a meal.

The whole night the idols remained in the same position before Atram Bhimu's house, and next morning the rites continued. The Kolam *bhaktal* took up the feather-holder of Bhimana, carried it into the house of the host, to bless the dwelling and its inmates. When he came out, he was once more gripped by the power of the god and swayed forwards and backwards, waving the feather bunch before the ritual objects. After replacing the symbol of Bhimana he took one of the whips and gave the host a few light strokes, then he crouched down beside the altar and began to play softly on one of the flutes.

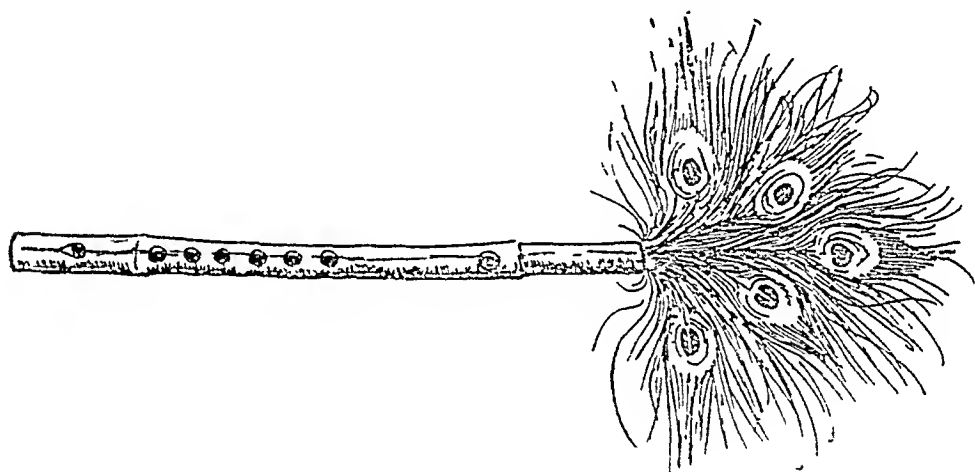


FIG. XXXIII, *Kolam flute with peacock-feathers.*

After a while all the women of the host's settlement brought grain and sprays of bean-leaves on winnowing fans and had their foreheads marked with turmeric powder by the *bhaktal*, who sat before the idols and received the offerings.

Finally the Kolam men and boys were once more entertained to a meal and this they ate sitting in a long line in the courtyard. The sun had long passed the zenith when the idols and ritual objects were taken up and, to the beating of drums, the procession set out for the Bhimana shrine near Pangri. It did not take the straight road, but visited two of the other Gond settlements of Madura. In each the idols were put down and the women brought offerings of grain and bean-leaves and asked for themselves and their children the god's blessing.

With this the Bhimana rites of Sati had come to an end as far as the Gonds were concerned, but the Kolams celebrated that night the great feast at the main shrine of their god.

The visit of the great Bhimana of Pangri to the Gond settlements of Madura can be regarded as a typical example of those Bhimana rites in the month of Sati in which Gonds play the rôle of worshippers and Kolams function as priests. Not all villages have equally often the opportunity of welcoming a great Bhimana but when it occurs they are seldom found lacking in providing offerings and sacrificial animals for the powerful god.

Bhimana is not the only god whose main rites fall in Sati. The feasts of certain minor deities such as the goddess Boam and Boja Pen, a male god, are also celebrated during this month in much the same style as the rites in Bhawe already described (pp. 325-330). Sati is, moreover,

joined with the Persa Pen

### *The Month of Pus*

The cold weather continues throughout Pus (December—January) with pleasant sunny days and clear starlit nights, often so chilly that the scantily clad Gond suffers acutely when he has to journey at night. Yet he has to watch his crops against nocturnal marauders and many a feast forces him to spend a night or two in the open. On the field-platforms he protects himself as well as he can by a fire and blankets, but I have often wondered how men clad only in a loin cloth and perhaps a shawl loosely thrown round their shoulders, can bear the cold during religious rites in forest or field, often lasting into the small hours of the morning.

The dry weather crops, yellow millet and wheat, come now into ear but except for the need of protecting them against animals they give little work and the rain crops have all been safely brought in. Thus the Gond has once more time to celebrate feasts and with sufficient food in his store baskets and perhaps a little cash in hand from the sale of cotton or oil seed he would not be a light-hearted aboriginal if he did not use to the full this freedom from pressure of work and economic anxiety. While the very opposite to Bhawe in weather and temperature Pus rivals that month in the number of feasts and religious rites, many of which lead the Gonds on pilgrimages to distant cult-centres.

The Persa Pen rites are held by many clans in Pus with as elaborate a ceremonial and as lavishly as

Parandoli is once  
But most famous as a feast attended by Gonds of all clans is the

great *jatra* or fair at Keslapur, the old clan-centre of the Buigota branch of the Mesram clan. Situated a day's trek north-west of Utnur Keslapur sees, at the dark moon ending Pus, a gathering not only of thousands of Gonds, but also of hundreds of shop-keepers and entertainers, and of a multitude of Lambaras, Mathuras, Marathas and other castes. For round the ancient clan-feast of the Mesram people, still performed at the dead of night and including the sacrifice of a cow, has grown up a *jatra* with all the features of the colourful annual fairs generally connected with certain feasts of Hindu temples. In another context we shall observe the peculiar interactions between the Gond pilgrims and the crowds of merchants and sightseers who collect at Keslapur. For the thousands of Gonds who find the time and means to attend the Keslapur *jatra*, the gay crowds, the bazaars, the chance of meeting acquaintances from distant villages and the wide choice of clothes, ornaments and trinkets, are sources of immense pleasure, and the *jatra* at Keslapur thus brilliantly closes the series of feasts celebrated in the month of Pus.

### *Harvest-Home.*

Upon the comparative leisure of Pus follows once more a period of brisk activity. Mahon, corresponding to January-February, is the time when practically all the cool weather crops are reaped, threshed and brought in, and so there is little time for any lengthy celebrations. The great millet, wheat and dry weather pulses are now rapidly ripening and the second cotton crop must be picked. In the fields with grain crops the usual offerings of cooked food, and sometimes of a fowl, are given to the Earth Mother, but cotton demands an offering of a different kind, and when the picking begins a coconut is broken on the field. No new-eating ceremony is necessary to allow the harvesting or eating of any dry weather crop; the *Nowon* performed for the sake of the rain-crops covers also those ripening later in the year. But at the outset of the cold weather harvest ears of millet are again tied to the poles of threshing-floors and ultimately offered to the Earth Mother, the giver of crops.

It is the time when many people live mainly on their fields. Not only are they busy on the threshing-floor most of the day, but at night the cut ears and the threshed grain must be carefully guarded against both human and animal depredations. So they build *mandwa* or shelters on the stubble close to the threshing-floor and there keep all or part of the grain as an insurance against the danger of village fires. Cotton, on the other hand, is picked and immediately taken to the village and there filled into large store-baskets.

Gonds do not know how to gin cotton, and try to sell it as quickly as possible. Sometimes traders come at this season to the villages and

buy the cotton from the cultivator, arranging themselves for the transport. But more often the Gonds take their cotton to Adilabad or Asifabad and sell in the open market, or they deliver it to their *sahukar* in payment of debts. So at this time you constantly see strings of carts with high loads of cotton roughly sown into sacking moving towards the few trading centres of the district.

Castor seed, chillies and tobacco are also harvested in this month, castor mainly for sale but chillies and tobacco for home consumption. Far from selling chillies or tobacco unless badly pressed for money most Gonds seem to consume more of these commodities than they grow and may as early as the rains have to purchase them in local bazaars.

Amidst all the activities of the harvest the people find little time for festivities and the only community rite in this month is on the full moon night.

**1. Uthpala Markanda.** On their return from battle a great feast was held which is now commemorated by offerings given in the name of all the gods. It is said that on that night Gonds living in the valley of the Godavari heap bamboo sticks on the river bank and that next morning these bamboos are found crushed to splinters and the river runs red like blood. I never found anyone who had himself seen this rite performed but little imagination is required to recognize it as sympathetic magic. The bamboos symbolize the enemies who may at times have threatened this southern border of the Gond country and their crushing combined with the reddening of the river signifies the foes' destruction, their blood mixing with the water of the Godavari.

In the rites which the Gonds now perform at the gods' full moon there is little trace of any martial association. The women clean the houses and prepare *dal*-cakes and fried bread. After nightfall the village *devan* sacrifices a fowl before the Village Mother and the women of each household bring some of the food cooked for the occasion. This too is offered to *Auwal*. Food offerings are also scattered before *Aki Pen* and finally the young men anoint the stones sacred to Mahadeo and offer sweetmeats and coconuts. There is neither drumming nor singing on this occasion and the ceremony hardly breaks the normal daily routine.

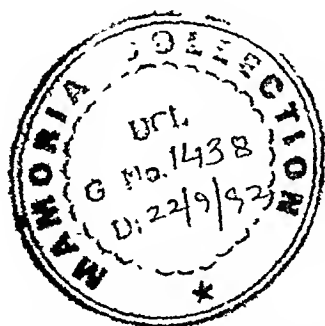
By the end of Mahon the harvest has been gathered and the threshing completed. The marketing of their crops is for the moment the only task before the Gonds, and it is the phase in their agricultural activities in which they show least skill. Many men have standing arrangements with a *sahukar* to whom they deliver a great portion of all their crops in repayment of loans taken earlier in the year. For grain borrowed in the rains the time when food is frequently short they have to return after harvest one hundred and twenty five

to one hundred and fifty per cent. of the quantity advanced; that is either in November, if the rain-crops are good, or in February. The *sahukar*, to whom most of their clients are also indebted for cash loans, usually insist on purchasing most of the money-crops, but pay only part of the value in cash and set the rest against interest and repayment of the capital amount. The main cash-crops of the Gonds, on the sale of which they rely for the payment of their land-revenue and forest-dues, are cotton, castor seed, sesame, and to a lesser extent certain pulses, wheat and rice. Small millets and jawari are seldom sold; nevertheless a large part of the harvest often goes to the *sahukar* in repayment of loans taken before sowing or during the rains. Most Gonds retain limited amounts of pulses, oil-seed and sometimes cotton for barter at the weekly bazaars, where transactions are often not in cash but in kind.

A detailed discussion of the Gonds' economy under modern conditions must await a later chapter; even the above short description applies mainly to the free peasant of the hill tracts, whose activities during the yearly round we are here observing. The dependent tenant's lot is considerably different as his grain is often divided on the threshing-floor, the landlord claiming his share before any of the cultivator's other obligations can be fulfilled.

When he has repaid loans, perhaps staved off a clamorous money-lender and paid out the annual contributions to the village messenger and his blacksmith, the Gond stores the grain left for his family's needs in stout bamboo baskets smeared inside with cow-dung and protected on the top by a coat of mud and cow-dung. Such baskets are kept in the attic, in a corner of the main room or in a separate storehouse. Large grain bins (*sibi*) of wattle with a conical thatched roof that stand on piles in the courtyards are more usual in the plains than in the hills, though there too they are not unknown. Only a very few Gonds living in close contact with non-aboriginal peasant populations have taken to grain-pits dug in the ground.

His grain stored and his debts at least temporarily settled, the Gond enjoys early in Durari (February-March) a short spell of leisure. But with the Durari rite begins another agricultural year, another sequence of hard work, a fair amount of pleasure, and innumerable rites and ceremonies in the service of exigent gods.



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*A Glossary, a Bibliography  
and the Index will be found at  
the end of Book II*